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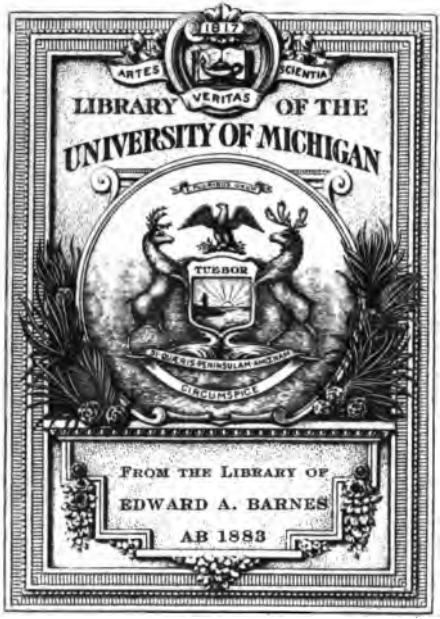

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VITAL LIES

STUDIES OF SOME VARIETIES OF RECENT OBSCURANTISM

BY

VERNON LEE/pseud

VOL. II

LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD
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How then may we devise one of those falsehoods in the hour of need, I said, which we lately spoke of—just one royal lie [*γενναῖόν τι ἓν ψευδομένους*] which may deceive the rulers, if that be possible, and at any rate the rest of the city?

Plato, *Republic*, iii. 414
(Jowett's Translation).

Relling. I'm fostering the vital lie in him.
Gregers. Vital lie? Is that what you said?
Relling. Yes—I said vital lie—for illusion, you know, is *the* stimulating principle.

Ibsen, *The Wild Duck.*

Turnbull & Spears, Printers, Edinburgh

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PART II
APPLIED OBSCURANTISM
(continued)

"*On pragmatic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true. Now, whatever its residual difficulties may be, experience shows that it certainly does work and that the problem is . . . to determine it so that it will combine with all the other working truths.*"—W. James, "Pragmatism," p. 299.

"*There is sound human nature behind the instinct, as we may properly call it, which leads men to distrust an 'atheist.'*"—Crawley, "Tree of Life," p. 296.

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CHAPTER II

ANTHROPOLOGICAL APOLOGETICS AND THE WILL TO MAKE OTHERS BELIEVE[1]

I

FROM the *Will to believe* we pass on to the *Will to make others believe.*

Modernism, represented by Father Tyrrell's very beautiful posthumous book, has afforded me an example of how statements admittedly false in the usual sense of that word, may be accepted as *true* in the sense of truly adapted to certain spiritual demands. It is in the books of an anthropologist, of all improbable people, that I have found the explicit theory, no longer that opinions may be true because they are desirable, but, on the contrary, that opinions which are false have been and should continue to be fostered because of their usefulness.

Mr Ernest Crawley is not himself a believer, or at

[1] Ernest Crawley, "The Tree of Life, a Study of Religion." 1905. Same author, "The Mystic Rose: a Study of Primitive Marriage." 1902.

least, he does not proceed as if he were one; for the critical chapters of Father Tyrrell's "Christianity at the Cross Roads" make one cautious in the presence of the amazing apparent openness of minds which reveal themselves afterwards as quite amazingly made up. Be this as it may, even as Father Tyrrell begins by a thorough critical demolition of the Catholicism which he intends to rebuild, so Mr Crawley sets out with a half volume destructive of the official, the usual, claims of Christianity in particular and of supernaturalism in general. A *Priest-Eater*, according to the Italian phrase, could do no better than to carry about and if possible get by heart those chapters of "The Tree of Life" which deal with the historical genuineness of the Christian Myth. If toleration had not taught agnostics a certain perhaps prudish respectfulness, what a store-house of Voltairian jests those chapters would be!

And now I come to think of it, are we latter-day rationalists so absolutely right in behaving as if we really respected every "honest religious opinion"? Should we be less serious if we honestly laughed at the ideas of our adversaries? And are not certain ideas grotesque, or merely delightfully, childishly funny when held or taught nowadays, which may have been venerable and tremendous in their original intellectual surroundings? Why should I have restrained delighted laughter at the sight of a certain Madonna's complete *trousseau*, handkerchiefs, garters and all, and

copied the embarrassed silence of the Catholic friends who accompanied me, merely because of our modern theory that one must respect every sincere belief and accept every insincere one as if one did not recognise its insincerity? But I have not the courage of my opinions on this subject of respectfulness, and indeed I am not quite sure what my opinions are, nor is this the place to go into them.

This parenthesis is really connected with the subject in hand, since it is such books as Mr Crawley's which have taught us some of that respectful attitude towards beliefs, sometimes poetic and charming, but oftener also foolish and disgusting, as the ideas and habits of barbarous people are likely to be; since it takes a stomach fortified by much science not to be sickened by the contents of anthropologists' dredging-nets, as they are pulled up out of the fertile primæval filth of nonsense which was once wisdom, and obscenity which was once morals.

For after the chapters on the historical evidence of Christianity, or rather historical evidence against Christianity, come the chapters in the style of Frazer's "Golden Bough," on the prehistoric origins of religions in general, as deduced from the comparative study of obsolete mythologies and of what travellers can tell us of the ideas and habits of existing savages. The anthropological chapters of "The Tree of Life," like the whole of Mr Crawley's more purely anthropological volume,

"The Mystic Rose," are minute studies of the concatenations of ideas, the frequently faulty concatenations of absurd ideas, out of which, according to Mr Crawley, have arisen practices and standards, not only restrictions and sanctions, purifications and atonements (the whole complicated and often self-contradictory system of taboos and sacrifices), but also actual religious opinions to which Mr Crawley traces the origin of dogmas like that of Original Sin and even of the Trinity.

All this amounts to saying that the religious doctrines and observances still taught in our days, do not answer to the origin assigned as a reason for their acceptance. The inspiration of Scripture, the tradition of the Church, the Teaching of Christ, the Commandments of Jehovah, are mere fallacies and falsehoods, bolstering up other fallacies and falsehoods, as the false Decretals bolstered up the false donation of Constantine. The "Truths of Religion" are reduced to so much mythology, mistaken scientific hypotheses, and futile practical regulations of primæval savagery, rendered still more mistaken and futile by successive interpretations, emendations, and interpolations without end.

With Mr Crawley as our Virgil we descend Dante-like through layer after layer, depths within depths, of superstitions we can scarcely conceive, and practices we dare scarcely describe; and at the bottom of that pit we find ourselves in the presence of . . .

well, let us say, of that mystic musical instrument, which consecrates and fertilises and exorcises: the Bull-Roarer. This is the very reason, according to Mr Crawley, for continuing to teach the doctrines of religion, for conforming to its customs and endowing its ministers; the only one, above all, against disestablishing the Church of England.

Thus crudely stated, the thesis of Mr Crawley sounds too grotesque to be taken in consideration. But taken —I will not say critically examined—in detail, it embodies, however questionably, a large amount of unquestionable fact, both psychological and sociological, and sets forth, however sophistically, an even larger amount of suggestive hypothesis. It constitutes, in short, one of the finest achievements of the "Will-to-believe."

II

And now let us return to the Bull Roarer, which may be taken as a convenient symbol (the volume should have been called after it, not after the Cross) of the functions attributed by Mr Crawley to Religion. For the Bull Roarer consecrates and purifies, makes things lawful and unlawful; it awakens fear, and "*there is an explicit connection between the Churinga (or sacred Bull Roarer) and the transmission of physical life in the Australian philosophy: the application of a Churinga*

is supposed to cause conception." In short, the Bull Roarer presides over primitive man's version of what Mr Crawley usually alludes to as the *Elemental View of Life.*

And first of all: please do not confuse *elemental* with *elementary;* for nothing can be less elementary than this view of life, as will appear from my difficulty in doing what Mr Crawley never attempts, namely, defining it in a few words.

We may make a first shot at what Mr Crawley is talking about, by saying that the Elemental View of Life is concerned with, or arises from (both in fact) the consideration of what may be called *the elements of human life,* individual and social, to wit, births, deaths and marriages. And one meaning of *Elemental View of Life*—for instance, when Mr Crawley is speaking of the *Elemental View of Life* of primitive peoples—is the view concerned with the dangers, real and imaginary, connected with these *elements* of human existence, and hence with the rules and proceedings, taboos, exorcisms, purifications, expiations, prohibitions, which are supposed to diminish the dangers besetting man's life throughout, but most particularly at its most critical acts, points, and stages, namely, as already said, births, deaths, and marriages.[1]

[1] P. 264 *et seq.*; "*But every man, when he happens to be brought down face to face with the elemental realities of existence, birth and death, hunger and thirst,* ipso facto *becomes a religious subject.*"

Dangers besetting life! Two-thirds of Mr Crawley's anthropological work, both in this volume and in "The Mystic Rose," are intended to bring home to us the way in which primitive man is hagridden by the notion of danger lurking in every object and attending every act. Now we civilised persons also know that our life, our comfort, our fortune, are at the mercy of a hundred contingencies. But we have learned to think of sickness, droughts and draughts, storms, accidents, as concatenations of outer circumstances which, even if we cannot forestall, we can in most cases understand. Primitive Man, on the contrary, has not. What *he* thinks most about are his own desires and habits; these alone are connected in his experience; all other facts are scattered, ragged and ragbaggy, taking what order they get from intermittent connection with himself. The object of primitive thought is barely considered apart from the needs and customs of the subject; and when this object assumes some sort of independent existence this objective existence is but a copy of that of the subject.[1] In other words, thinking little, he thinks in confused personal terms and associates all that happens with a will, with passions and habits like his own. The malignity inherent in things is for him a literal reality; evils are *evil-ones;* and whereas *evils* may be prevented, *evil ones* must be

[1] *Cf.* Lévy-Bruhl's "Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures." 1910.

appeased. The Will, which Primitive Man imagines inherent in all, things, is a personal will, and it is met by personal feelings: not only fear, but hope, and most of all, respect as towards another more powerful and utterly mysterious self; mysterious because the personality is, after all, *in things*, not in men; mysterious because undefined, baffling, unintelligible; mysterious above all, because this which is human and yet not human, this monster-personality compounded, chimera-like, of incongruous beings and objects—man-animal but also man-stone, man-flame, man-plant, man-sickness or man-storm—expresses its will not in definite words but in the inarticulate and enigmatic language of benefits and injuries. This being the case, Primitive Man's unceasing efforts to circumvent the evil possibilities besetting life begets what is more important even than any system of sanctions and prohibitions, namely the habit of propitiation of one knows not what; the tendency to conform and obey, only the more that one is not sure why one conforms or what one obeys; the habit of bowing to an imperative whose origins cannot be traced, and whose nature it is far better to leave unquestioned.

This particular religious habit of obedience to the mysterious, is, I believe, another *element*, if I may use the word, of what Mr Crawley means by the *elemental* in human life; elemental because, being automatic, it is treated as instinctive, and being unreasoning, it

is treated as unconscious; in short, *elemental*, because you cannot see your way beyond.[1]

Now this attitude of obedience to a mysterious will is, I need scarcely remark, of very great advantage to Primitive Man; the families and races which it welds together are likely to survive by the possession proximately of unity of purpose, and ultimately of self-control in their single members; and the survival of those who possess these advantages means the survival and increase of the advantageous group of habits.[2] Racial selection will have confirmed this obscure element of racial existence; and what we call *selection* being automatic, unreasoning, and such that we think of it in company with the "Forces of the Universe" is itself surely something *elemental*—at least I think its operation goes to increase that *Elemental* character which Mr Crawley speaks about with all due elemental darkness.

And here I would open a parenthesis: It is curious how easily, in talking about things which are difficult

[1] "The Tree of Life," p. 260. . . . "*In close connexion with the elemental limit of religion is the fact that its action generally takes place in the mysterious twilight of sub-consciousness. This is one reason why man is so slow to realize, so chary of discussing and so tenacious in holding what is to him a sacred possession. The impulse itself, which makes us regard a thing as sacred is a radiation from the religious impulse.*"

[2] "The Tree of Life," p. 332. "*The wear and tear of evolution has, so to say, brought the necessary elements into their proper places by a natural process the motive forces of which we have attempted to describe. . . .*"

to understand and difficult to express, one developes a certain imaginative, almost æsthetic, complacency towards confusion and obscurity; and how an instinct —shall we say an *elemental* instinct?—arises, admonishing us in vague and irrefutable words or no words—that where we do *not* understand there must be many greater and finer things than where we *do* understand; a feeling akin to that of the sublime, as of finding oneself in a huge building dimly lighted; a feeling which has doubtless had its racial advantages in making us patient with the still mysterious, and impatient with perfunctory explanations. In this sense it seems to me that Mr Crawley's conception of religion as a function of the "Elemental Life" or of the "Elemental View of Life" is reinforced by a Bergsonian Vitalism identifying Life with some kind of intuitive will, and a knowledge of reality with instinct as opposed to reason. In some confused fashion—and we have no right to ask for clearness (and still less chance of getting it) in dealing with such subjects and such philosophers—the original anthropomorphism of primitive man is justified in Mr Crawley's eyes (if one may talk of eyes where all is dark) by coincidence with a philosophical anthropomorphism to which the evolution of the race is itself the manifestation of a mystic racial will; the Bull Roarer is not only venerable for what it symbolised to our remote forefathers and our remoter savage

cousins; it becomes sacred, or at least semi-sacred as the possible symbol of some dim philosophic creed of this very modern philosopher.

Be this as it may, it is no supposition of mine, but clearly expressed fact, that there is another important side to Mr Crawley's notion of the part played by the religious beliefs and attitudes of Primitive Man. As there was "*an explicit connection between the Churinga (or Sacred Bull Roarer) and the transmission of physical Life,*" so there is an explicit connection, in Mr Crawley's theory, "*between the religious and the sexual impulses, and even in the normal subject there must be points of contact between the two dominant expressions of vital force.*" Basing himself upon the evidence of primitive mythology and ritual, and adopting rather hastily the hypothesis of certain schools of psychology and psychopathy, Mr Crawley informs us that "*the religious emotion springs from the same source as the sexual*" [1] and thence infers "*that*

[1] Mr Crawley has considerably distorted the evidence of Mr Starbuck's valuable "Psychology of Religion;" for Mr Starbuck considers religious exaltation not as a consequence, but as a coincident accompaniment, of puberty. In the following passage Mr Crawley incorporates another of Mr Starbuck's views. I would point out that Mr Crawley's whole thesis is never clearly organised, but diffluent, putting ideas in contact rather than in connection. "*It is at puberty that originality begins . . . and if mental development chiefly depends on diverting the sexual, or rather the physically vital impulse into other channels, then we may infer that the deferring both natural and artificial of the sexual life is one of the chief factors of progress. In this matter religion has played an important part.*"

by preserving sexual integrity and by consecrating this secondary source of life, religion performs a service on which the vitality of the race depends," adding in support of his theory that "*there is a curious analogy to be found in what may be called the shyness of religion. The resentment shown by religious persons when their deepest convictions are doubted or attacked, is an instinctive recoil from danger threatening the sources of being.*"

Religion in this sense of "*being sprung from the same source as sexual emotion*" and of "*preserving sexual integrity,*" appears to Mr Crawley as more than ever *Elemental* and *Vital.* And this is why the demonstration of the anthropological, nay, physiological, origins of religious beliefs is, in the eyes of Mr Crawley, not an attack but a defence of religion, the very finest defence that can possibly be made, since it validates religion's claims by the very facts which have hitherto been set forth to discredit and disgrace them. Voltaire himself, re-incarnated in Anatole France, would be flouted by anthropology in the person of Mr Crawley; for could not Mr Crawley cap every absurdity and indecency with a greater one? and has not Mr Crawley appropriated to the service of religious orthodoxy, that most grotesque and venerable of instruments of music, the Bull Roarer?

Now I want to say at once that, so far as an ignoramus can say so, I think Mr Crawley is probably quite right, and that, in a way, Voltaire, with his jests

about Nebuchadnezzar, the witch of Endor, and those sacred onions of Egypt, " qui n'étoient pas tout à fait des Dieux, mais leur ressembloient beaucoup," was quite wrong. Many of these beliefs and rites, which appear to us ridiculous, obscene, or ferocious, may have been at the time of their origin, respectable scientific hypotheses and moral and humanitarian practices. Moreover, they were not only useful in keeping our savage ancestors alive, and inducing them indirectly to beget and to nurture us, but they were even more useful in fostering certain standards and commandments, and more useful even than that in securing mental attitudes of reverence, of obedience, of conservatism: in fact, being part of the Elemental Life (as well as of the elementary), they were useful in producing *Elemental Views of Life.*

In short, so long as Mr Crawley wishes us to be grateful for some of the extraordinary misconceptions of Primitive Man, I am, so to speak, quite ready for a sort of posthumous and platonic enshrining of the Bull Roarer. In fact, I am more willing than Mr Crawley himself; for I do not mind saying that a respect for truth and, indeed, for morality of any kind, is a purely human requirement, and does not seem to have presided over the proceedings of the Forces which fashioned the Universe, or the Gods which made Man, thank heaven, in an image which was not their own. So that when I was told, quite casually, that a rude

musical instrument, still used for calling the faithful during the Passion-days-silence of the Bells, was in reality the Bull Roarer, I felt I should like to visit the church where it was, and burn a grain of incense in its honour.

III

But how about Real Believers? How about those who still kneel like children at the knee of God, looking with unquestioning faith into the eyes of the Father? Those whose passionate longing for the sacraments is checked by their passionate reverence, those for whom the drops from the chalice, the wafer between their unclosed lips restore and refresh the soul as no earthly food or wine ever comforted and strengthened their body? How about those for whom the cosmos is held together by moral forces, for whom the heavens still tell the glory of God, and for whom, even as for Dante, the soul of man in moved by the same Love which moves the sun and stars—"L'amor che muove il Sole e l'altre stelle?" I have a right to speak of them, because, in these days of Will-to-Believe, of dogmas interpreted to mean something else, of faith justified and recommended for its moral or social utility, it has been given to me to behold, even if only through a glass and dimly, the loveliness and glory of souls which really believed: believed as a child,

because they were and could be no other than exquisite children, with a good child's absolute trust in the words of those that it loves.

What of them? The bare idea revolts me, and yet I feel bound to bring them in, and ask what would they think of such passages as these, which I cull from Mr Crawley's "*Tree of Life.*"

P. 261, *et seq.*—"*The analogies from savage culture show that religion is a direct outcome of elemental human nature, and that this elemental human nature remains practically unchanged. . . . If a savage eats the flesh of a strong man or divine person, and a modern Christian partakes sacramentally of Christ's body and blood under the forms of bread and wine, there is evidently a human need behind both acts which prompts them and is responsible for their similarity.*"

And then:

P. 224.—"*Anthropologists seem to be agreed that the primitive conception of the force which underlies tabooed persons and which we here identify with the sacred essences of life, is an undifferentiated idea; that, while we should call some of the persons and things to which 'sacredness' attaches holy, and other unclean, early man made no such distinction. The uncleanness, for example, of girls at puberty and the sanctity of holy men do not, to the primitive mind, differ from each other.*"

"*Many a term, translated 'unclean' in the Bible, is to be interpreted in this way.*"

Again :

" *Payne . . . has suggested, on philological grounds, that the distinction between good and bad first arose in connection with food. The hunger and thirst after righteousness is more than a metaphor.*" [1]

Or this :

P. 264.—" *It seems at first paradoxical that our highest imaginings should be rooted deep in our animal nature, but the conclusion becomes a truism as soon as it is formulated. . . .*

" *Women are, in the general sense, more religious than men. Their life is kept by organic peculiarities nearer to the primitive.*"

Or this passage about the origin of the conception of the Deity :

P. 253.—" *But he (God) was neither a spirit nor an abstraction, but a superhuman man . . . man being the chief or only " Maker " known to man. In early thought, therefore, God is not nature personified . . . to the savage, 'spirit' means something both more and less than it means to us. The same is true of 'God'—the term in early language is more of an adjective than a noun. The idea of God is complex, the sorcerer, as an 'embryo-God' has a share in its formation.*"

[1] Mr Crawley has started with a quotation from Starbuck that " *Physiological hunger widens its appropriateness . . . hungering after righteousness is an irradiation of the crude instinct of Food-getting.*"

Or this one, with its Bergsonian and biological treatment of that immortal essence, the soul:

P. 237.—"*First of all we must note a common fallacy of the animistic theory of religion, namely, that it is the soul which gives life. The truth is that the life is the soul.*"

Or these quotations bearing on the relations of Religion and Ethics:

P. 266.—"*Religion affirms not morality nor altruism, but health and strength of body and character, physical and moral cleanliness and decency, deference to age, experience, and position, principles which are bound up with the elemental view of life.*"

P. 273.—"*. . . If ever a conviction seemed to be mortized in adamant it is perhaps the belief that religion is essentially altruistic. But the facts unmistakeably point to the exact opposite. The most powerful instinct in human nature could hardly be expected* à priori *to show in its second stage such a reversal of type.*"

P. 277.—"*The lesson of religious cruelty, like the lesson of martyrdom, is that if religion, the permanent expression of vitality, can show such invincible strength of cruelty on the one hand, and of endurance on the other, the fact is due to an increase of vitality.*"

Above all, what would Real Believers say to the chapters in which Mr Crawley expounds all the converging though sometimes conflicting facts and hypotheses against the divine origin of the faith which

they hold? "*We must not unduly emphasize this point of view*," as Mr Crawley concludes after quoting anthropological authorities in favour of a primitive identification of "holiness" and "uncleanness," and of "sacred" with "dangerous."

Decidedly not. And least of all with Real Believers. A generation ago they would have ceased to call on us; in 1842 they would have imprisoned us like Holyoake; in 1812 pilloried us like the bookseller Eaton;[1] and a couple of centuries earlier, they would have burnt us like Servetus or Bruno. Nowadays they would only be inexpressibly surprised and hurt. And, paradoxical though it sound, one would not hurt with one's opinions these self-same people who, if we had not got the upper hand, would have hurt us very zealously *ad majorem Dei gloriam*.

But they will not read Mr Crawley's book nor mine. And Mr Crawley's book is not intended for them.

For are not such Real Believers themselves the perfect product of that gradually developing *elemental*

[1] In 1812, Eaton, a bookseller, was prosecuted for selling the "Age of Reason," and sentenced by Lord Ellenborough to be imprisoned for eighteen months, and to stand for an hour in the pillory ("Modern England," by A. W. Benn, vol. i. p. 123). In August, 1842, G. J. Holyoake was condemned to six months' imprisonment in Gloucester Gaol for declaring disbelief in God's existence and saying "*in the present state of distress the people were too poor to have a God*," and that as a measure of economy the lecturer (H.) would "*put the Deity on half-pay*," meaning that he would devote half the revenue of the Church to secular purposes (A. W. Benn, "English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century," vol. i. p. 405).

view of life, with all its incomparable efficacy of misunderstanding and mystery, its safe subconscious vital egoism, its roots in the instinct of physical propagation; in fact, are they not religious because they can never understand the true functions of religion?

IV

I think that this is the distinctly expressed, rationalistic and indelicate core of what Mr Crawley would suggest in terms leaving more to the imagination and the sentiment of his Reader. The book is evidently written for other kinds of—I scarcely know whether Believers or Unbelievers. However, before accompanying Mr Crawley to his real audience, I want to make quite sure—or rather I want to stir about in my thoughts—whether the Real Believers are really so completely dominated by the subconscious elemental view of life as we are apt to take for granted.

The Real Believer believes that he ought to believe. This *ought to believe* might possibly be resolved into a habit of the *elemental* view of life, a habit socially, if not physiologically, transmitted. But what do we mean by this? That the habit should result either from imitation or from precept. Precept we have, for the purposes of this inquiry, ruled out. The habit is therefore transmitted by imitation; and imitation

is indeed a non-rational, instinctive matter, quite suitable to the *Elemental View of Life*, and extremely useful for its propagation. So far we agree with Mr Crawley. There is even something more to be said in favour of his thesis, although, curiously enough, I do not remember his having said it: Belief is, psychologically speaking, itself of the nature of a habit; it is, in the first instance, the expectation that what has happened before will happen again, that what is affirmed is rightly affirmed; it represents a *line of least resistance* for mental activity; since, were this not the case, we should not believe in the most necessary things but go straw-splitting and cavilling along our way, or rather along no way at all. Psychologically the tendency to believe is merely a differentiation of the tendency to acquiesce, and when there is no countervailing stimulus man is an acquiescent animal. Thus we get a tendency to believe quite apart from all primæval habits, as a result of something underlying all habits primæval or otherwise, something REALLY very elemental, namely, mental inertness. But here it seems to me that the elemental business comes to an end. In "Our Fathers have told us" there is imitation, there is habit, there is inertness. But there is also the active observation that our Fathers, nine times out of ten, have proved right; and the active deduction therefrom that if it is in their nature to be wise, they will probably prove right again, more par-

ticularly if their experience and their thought happen to have dealt with the subjects involved. This is the intelligent, the reasoning portion, as distinguished from the "elemental," as Mr Crawley calls it, of the principle of authority. Now it is quite as much to this side, to this actively intelligent side that religious "belief" has been due; exactly as it is, I venture to say *entirely* to the actively intelligent, and not to the "elemental" side of the human mind that religious *beliefs*, that is, *things believed*, are due. Mr Crawley's anthropological facts, both in this book and in the purely scientific (not openly apologetic). "Mystic Rose," demonstrate that what seems to us so much raving folly is merely the best common sense which could be supplied by excessively unskilled minds, pressed for time and perpetually scared by the fear of practical dangers, and rushing from conclusion to conclusion without our leisurely habits of defining our meaning. The view of things at the base of the religious practices of primitive Man are associations of ideas, generalizations, deductions, none the less intelligent for being mistaken; and accepted by those who hold them because the enormous majority of cognate associations of ideas, generalizations, and deductions have stood the test of experience; and because a proportion of those which have not stood this test have *appeared to do so* to the unpractised mental eye of the savage believer.

The perpetual transformation (and incidental confusion) of the items of primitive belief, that protean self-contradiction of all those views about what is or is not dangerous, that changing and wavering from the notion of *sacred-unclean* to *sacred-purifying* is, in fact, the result of primitive man's dissatisfaction with his explanation of things, and the proof that those explanations are rational and progressive. This Mr Crawley, anthropologist and historian as he is, cannot fail to admit. He tells us (p. 262) that—

"*Christianity is no survival from primitive religions, but a higher development from the same permanent sources.*"

Agreed: if by *permanent sources* are meant mankind's tendency to observe, to question and to reason, as well as mankind's tendency to acquiesce in what it is told and to be frightened of inquiring any further. If these are Mr Crawley's "*permanent sources*," we agree with his tautological addition "these are constant."

But that is only the beginning of Mr Crawley's sentence; here is the whole of it: "*Christianity is no survival from primitive religion, but a higher development from the same permanent sources. These are constant, and the beliefs to which they lead are constant also, recurring spontaneously or rather through the same functional causes; tradition simply supplies them with a groove.*"

Here we cease to agree with Mr Crawley, in so far that we cease to be clear about his meaning. Of course if we accept the "permanent sources" both of developed Christainity and of crude primæval mythology and ritual to be the that dualism of mental activity and mental inertness, they being constant, would produce *constant* beliefs; dut those beliefs would surely be the axioms at the base of all science, rather than any religious formula. But Mr Crawley makes an end to our indecision as to the *functional causes* to which he ascribes *permanence and constancy* by specifying the kind of *beliefs to which they lead*, and which are *themselves constant* and *spontaneously recurrent.*

"*Science,*" goes on Mr Crawley—(immediately after the clause "*tradition simply supplies them* (the spontaneously recurrent beliefs) a groove)—"*Science can thus endorse the words of a thoughtful writer* (*Church Times*, 28th August 1903), *that these rites and beliefs declare eloquently that there are spiritual needs common to the whole of mankind.*"

Let us pause and think over this double assertion; or rather sixfold; for we have: (1st) Mr Crawley asserting that (2nd) science endorses, that is to say, asserts the truth of (3rd) the words of the *Church Times*' Thoughtful Writer, which assert (4th) that certain rites and beliefs (5th) declare eloquently that (6th) there are spiritual needs common to the whole of

mankind," which comes to saying that Mr Crawley and science both admit the existence of "spiritual needs common to the whole of mankind." This seems profoundly true. And all the anthropological-psychological evidence placed before us by Mr Crawley really seems to come to that: *mankind has needs of inquiry and needs of acquiescence which are common to all its branches;* thus: Primitive peoples showed their spiritual needs in their elemental philosophy of fetishism, taboo, and, generally speaking, of the Bull Roarer; Mediæval Christianity displayed its spiritual needs in that mixture of Hebrew history and classic philosophy and cosmogony of which the poem of Dante is the immortal expression. And as to Mr Crawley and me, *we* show our common spiritual needs in regarding both Primitive Religion and Mediæval Christianity as of purely human and not at all supernatural origin, with the little divergence that Mr Crawley's common spiritual needs lead him to affirm (what my spiritual needs lead me to deny) namely, that this non-supernatural but eminently human origin of Christianity is the very reason why Christianity (being spontaneous) had better continue to be taught. . . .

But I have run on too fast, and left the *Thoughtful Writer of the "Church Times"* too far behind. Let us turn back and resume our, or rather Mr Crawley's, quotation of his thoughtful words:

"These rites and beliefs declare eloquently that

there are spiritual needs common to the whole of mankind.'

We had got so far, and Mr Crawley had agreed, and agreed also to disagree, about what I imagined to be those spiritual needs common to the whole of mankind—the *whole*, mind you, Buddhists, Mahometans, Shintoists, Agnostics, materialists, etc., etc., etc. Now mark how the Thoughtful Writer of the *Church Times* enumerates these common spiritual needs:

" *The need of an Incarnate Saviour, of a Triune God, of a Sacrament of Communion, are fundamental aspirations of the human race crying imperiously for satisfaction, and that He by whom alone they can be satisfied completely is in no mere phrase, but in very truth 'the desire of all nations.'* "

V

All these are indeed spiritual needs of the Real Believers, of those real Christians whom I mentioned before, and for whom, not without a quite unintellectual sense of relief, I shall now part company with the Thoughtful Writer of the *Church Times* of August 28, 1903.

How have these Christians (for, I think, believers in Buddha, Mahomet, and Jews and infidels may be left out of count) come to feel the need of an Incarnate

Saviour, of a Triune God, of a Sacrament of Communion, above all, of Him who is truly the desired of all nations? Is it because their remote, undreamed-of ancestors made no distinction between the uncleanness of girls at puberty and the sanctity of holy men, considered the sorcerer as an embryo God, ate the flesh of strong men or divine persons, in short, let us say, believed in the sacred Bull Roarer? *We* may know that it is so; Mr Crawley, the *Church Times*, and my unworthy self. But let us ask the Christians (and I should advise no allusions to anthropology!) themselves, why they believe in an Incarnate Saviour, in a Triune God, in a Sacrament of Communion and more especially in Jesus Christ: I think they will answer that they believe in it all because it has been revealed by God, registered in the Holy Scriptures, and taught by the Church. They will refer us to a thousand texts, a million ecclesiastical authorities, and, if we press them further, to the consensus of Christianity as expressed in the Creed and the Catechism. In other words, they believe because they have been taught. They have been taught about an Incarnate Saviour, a Sacrament of Communion, a Triune God, and a "*Jesus Christ his only son our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried, he descended into hell, the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into Heaven and*

sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty," exactly as they have been taught (or should have been taught) the multiplication table, the geography of the world, and the chronology of the kings of England (or kings of some other place). Indeed, they have been taught it far more thoroughly, since their tuition began at least by proxy at the first act after their birth; and that, after passing strict examination in these matters (even in the countries where no reading, writing, or arithmetic get taught!) they have been made to repeat the whole lesson not only on every important occasion of their lives, but on every Sunday and holiday most regularly. And to make the lessons if possible still more effectual, these Christians have been taught that their godfathers and godmothers promised and vowed for them that they would believe all the articles of the Christian Faith, and taught that they themselves are bound to believe in them on account of their godfathers' and godmothers' promise. This course of instruction (so indispensable that it is, very reasonably, begun by proxy) is carried on, not only in Christian communities, but is pressed, as the one thing needful, upon every other community whatsoever, teaching the Heathen or the Infidel having begun with the apostles and been continued through the ages, at the price of immense sufferings endured and inflicted in the process: for what are all the martyrs and all the inquisitors save people who have

wanted others to believe in the Catechism as taught to and by themselves?

This necessity of teaching religious beliefs has been moreover declared by the fact that, with the exception of the Hebrew Patriarchs and Prophets and the Emperor Trajan, no single human being, however virtuous and wise, has been admitted to heaven if born before the teaching of these truths had begun, or born in places and circumstances where they had not been taught. And finally, what greater proof that religious beliefs required teaching than the practice of the Almighty Himself, who found it necessary, not only to make (perhaps rather sketchy) revelations of them to Moses and the prophets, but eventually to send his Only Begotten Son to complete the information, followed by the Apostles, the Evangelists, St Paul, the Fathers, and all the Councils and Doctors to settle the details of this necessary instruction.

Surely in the face of such a consensus on the need for special religious tuition we must dissent from Mr Crawley and his Thoughtful Writer in the *Church Times*, and recognize that the recognition of the need for an Incarnate Saviour, a Triune God, and a Sacrament of Communion, let alone the recognition of some omitted but important items like Everlasting Reward in Heaven and Everlasting Punishment in Hell, could scarcely be trusted to elemental philosophies

subconsciously inherited from cannibal and taboo-fetishistic savages.

VI

Christian beliefs require to be taught: that much we have upon the very best authority. I scarcely think Mr Crawley would be of a different opinion; nor, to do him justice, have I found in all his book a single word suggesting that the truths of anthropology and comparative mythology (however much they justify those of Anglican Christianity) should be taught in the place of, or in addition to, the catechism. This is one of those questions where modern philosophy has shown its superiority by recognizing the existence of *different planes of thought*, a conception lacking equally in the crude systems of ideology and in the theology of the past. The *plane of causality*, for instance, is now recognized to be different from the *plane of freedom*; the plane of *natural science and psychology* is a different plane from that of *metaphysics*; and it is because these *planes* are different that our mind can go from one to the other and even co-exist in several at a time (time, like space, being outside the *plane of pure being*) without the smallest contradiction or inconsistency.[1]

[1] This invaluable addition to obscurantist philosophy has been admirably systematized in a work of Professor Münsterberg, whose scope and importance is clearly set forth on the paper wrapper in

Similarly the plane of the anthropologist and mythologist is independent of the plane of the Christian believer, and the connection between the two must on no account be interpreted as a causal or merely scientific

which, as in a mantle of honour, it is presented to the reader by an appreciative publisher. I will copy out this document *in extenso*, as affording a perfect schematic view of those various planes of thought which (although occasionally connected in practice) must, according to this school of philosophy, be kept intellectually apart.

"A book which ought to appeal to every serious reader who seeks a deeper meaning for his life.

THE

ETERNAL VALUES

BY

HUGO MÜNSTERBERG

Professor of Psychology, Harvard University

Part I. The Meaning of Values.	I. Physical Nature. II. The Psychical Nature. III. The personalities. IV. The obligations. V. The satisfaction of the Will. VI. The Eternal Values.
Part II. The Logical Values.	VII. The values of Existence. VIII. The value of Connection.
Part III. The Æsthetical Values.	IX. The values of Unity. X. The values of Beauty.
Part IV. The Ethical Values.	XI. The values of Development. XII. The values of Achievement.
Part V. Metaphysical Values.	XIII. The values of Holiness. XIV. The values of Absoluteness.

"We have come to feel that life does not become more worth living by a mere heaping up of scientific facts. We seek a philosophy which can do justice to all the experiences and all the aspirations of the twentieth

one; it is far more probably one of those connections which belong to the domain of *Will*. The explanations of the anthropological mythologist are therefore not intended to confirm the religious beliefs of those who already possess such; *that* possession as the Church (while teaching those beliefs) has always taught, is a matter of free will. The anthropological mythologist's explanations being purely scientific, regard only the causes why that belief—which from the scientific (causal) point of view is, of course, *determined* (though from the metaphysic or theologic point of view, of course, *free*) has been determined, in other words, has had to exist. These two planes—that of the believer and of the anthropological mythologist—do not conflict, because they never come into contact: nothing, even in the most empirical sense, is rarer than that a Christian believer should be an anthropological

century, and yet which avoids the shallowness of modern positivism and scepticism. Mere preaching and mere enthusiasm are insufficient. What is needed is a starting point for any new development, is a thorough system of thought in which our right and our duty to believe in the eternal ideals are proved to the sceptical thinker. Truth and beauty, progress and morality, religion and metaphysics must be recognized as absolute values in sharpest contrast to the Pragmatism of our time. The 'Eternal Values' aims to fulfil this demand."

After which valuation, not only of Existence, Beauty, Development, Achievement, Holiness, Absoluteness, etc., but of Professor Münsterberg's attempt to value them as Eternal there remains to deal with only one other value, and this accordingly closes the list in capitals only one size smaller than the "Eternal Values" of the title:

TEN SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE NET.

mythologist, or *vice versa*; and on the rare occasions when these different planes co-exist in the same individual, they are nevertheless parallel and distinct, *e.g.* the anthropological mythologist, as is shown by this very book, never dreams of addressing his purely scientific [causative] and deterministic remarks to minds on the purely metaphysic (*i.e.* free, *non-causative*) *plane of belief*. And therefore it is not only legitimate, but inevitable (if one may use the word in such philosophical discussions) that Mr Crawley's book is written for persons who are on the plane of *not* believing in Anglican Christianity. For instance I find on page 261:

"*When we recognize, as the anthropological evidence enables us to do, that it (Christianity) is rooted more firmly than other systems in the good ground of human nature, and that its vital principle is the instinct for life in its purest form, we have, I think, secured a new method of defence which is both positive and scientific.*" You see by those two last adjectives that we are on the *causative* plane, that of mere science, not of metaphysics, of the Will and Belief. My own remarks in answer exist also, be it well understood, on that merely scientific and positive plane, for I have no sort of hope, that any genuine Christian believer will ever come across, or coming across, ever be influenced by, them. And here are some of these my purely rationalistic and quite causally determined reflections.

VII

(*Excursus*)

"*Concentrated vitality*," writes Mr Crawley, "*is in itself neither good nor bad, but for practical purposes it is a blessing only if it can be safely guided into proper channels.*"

What practical purposes? Whose practical purposes? The Cultus of "Concentrated Vitality," the "Elemental View of Life"—would seem, from Mr Crawley's admiration for it, to have been a blessing for primitive man; since, had it not been a blessing, even if only in disguise, why should it be pointed out as the honoured ancestor from whom less primitive religions inherit their rights? The *practical purposes* must therefore extend to more recent times; and Mr Crawley must mean that although the cultus of *Concentrated Vitality* was a blessing once upon a time, and perhaps a blessing in its indirect influence upon the future, the only cultus which could be a blessing later on would be the cultus, not of *Concentrated Vitality* as such, but that of the Safe Guidance of such *Concentrated Vitality* into *Proper Channels*. Instead of the Concentrated Vitality, it is the Safe Guidance which has become the blessing, or else the Proper Channels. But this means a change in the cultus, corresponding to the change implied in the

passage from the notion "holy-dangerous-unclean" to the notion "holy-desirable-pure,"—the change, in fact, from a religion of sorcery to a religion of morality. The savage, or the half-civilized man, may worship a "Concentrated Vitality" because he conceives it as something vaguely human and amenable to propitiation; his worship depends not upon some kind of admiration for "Life" and whatever symbolizes "Life," but upon the notion that "Life" may play him a trick unless "Life" is respectfully treated: indiscriminate veneration depends upon undiscriminating fear. But once man guesses that "Life" is not a kind of human being, but a way we have of thinking of certain processes, such wholesale worship comes to an end, and mankind begins to agree with Mr Crawley that "*concentrated vitality is in itself neither good nor bad, but for practical purposes it is a blessing only if it can be safely guided into proper channels.*"

Civilization implies the gradual development of a principle of human selection, of a choice by which man encourages what makes for his safety and happiness, while discouraging what does not; and it implies, of course, also the gradual replacing thereby of the notion of man being in the hands of forces which must be propitiated because they are stronger than he, and which can be propitiated because they have the same nature as himself.

Mankind gradually learns that only other human beings can be propitiated by human civilities; and that while that which is more powerful than mankind cannot be propitiated in any way, that which can be averted or turned to man's purpose need no longer be propitiated: we do not compliment the bacillus of malaria, we destroy him; we do not pray to the lightning, we conduct it away from our houses. The sacredness of beneficent or malign natural forces and outer objects is gradually replaced by the sacredness of such of our feelings and actions as conduce to more universal and enduring safety and happiness. What becomes important is not life, however *concentrated*, but how life is lived.

VIII

Speaking of the chaotic mentality of primitive mankind, Mr Crawley informs us (p. 252), that in this, may I call it *elementary*, if not *elemental*, view of life discoverable in savages, "*not only can the Species not be thought of apart from the individual, but the 'individual' is not an abstraction either, and the species inheres in this or that other individual only. Take away all the individuals, and no conception of the species remains.*"

Yet, on an immediately preceding page we were

told, as if co-existence with such jumbles could be a recommendation for any idea, that "*doctrines like that of the Trinity are not superimposed upon monotheism, but are* implicit *already in the primitive mind.*"

Implicit. . . . A great deal has been done by theology, orthodox and unorthodox, with that modest word, and it would be interesting to know the precise meaning of thereof in this quotation. "Not superimposed" suggests that *implicit* means that the doctrine of the Trinity really is in the Primitive Mind, and that the Primitive Mind, if only it could get over its little difficulty (above mentioned) of disentangling the notions of *individual* and *species*, would, without ceasing to be primitive, discover or unwrap the doctrine of the Trinity which lay, like the petals of a rose, close-enfolded in the sheath of that confusion between *individual* and *species*. Or is it perhaps Mr Crawley's opinion that the confusion between *individual* and *species* so characteristic, he tells us, of the primitive mind, is exactly the stuff—let us say the rosebud—out of which the doctrine of the Trinity will, in a genial theological summer, be sure to unfold its hitherto only *implicit* existence?

Be this as it may, that statement about the primitive mind's little difficulty with the *individual* and the *species*, might suggest to some mere rationalist that the *implicit existence* therein of a particular theological doctrine is not necessarily an argument in favour of

that doctrine being acceptable to a mind, or even to minds (for we *have* distinguished between the individual and the species), having long ceased to be primitive.

But in all this that Mr Crawley calls "*a new method of defence which is both positive and scientific,*" there is, as in cognate less scientific apologetics, a very curious and recurrent oversight. In their anxiety to prove that religious beliefs, specified or unspecified, are desirable and indispensable, our apologists ignore that the essence of a religious belief is that it should be held to be true. They forget that although such beliefs may be quite wonderfully useful as long as they are held, they are not held except inasmuch as they are *held to be true.* And they will cease to be *held as true* so soon as it is understood that they originate not in Divine revelation but in the jumbled abortive thoughts and panic-ridden rituals of savage men.

"*These analogies from savage culture,*" writes Mr Crawley (p. 261 *et seq.*), "*show that religion . . . is a direct outcome of elemental human nature, and that this elemental human nature remains practically unchanged . . . if a savage eats the flesh of a strong man or divine person, and a modern Christian partakes sacramentally of Christ's body and blood under the forms of bread and wine, there is evidently a human need behind both acts which prompts them and is responsible for their similarity.*"

But need to eat a strong man's (or "divine person's") flesh in order to get his strength, is precisely not a *constant* need. What is constant is the need to get increase of strength *somehow*. The cannibal habit is due to a mistaken inference, namely, that, since some of the bodily elements of an ox are transmitted to us when we eat a beefsteak, the enviable qualities of a strong or holy man will be transmitted by the same process; the wrong inference being further complicated by a confusion between various kinds of desirable qualities and their modes of transmission. This being the case, once the mistake is cleared away, the need for eating strong men comes to an end, and the need of increasing one's own strength—which alone is really constant—resorts to "Plasmon," or Sandow's method, or electric belts, or Swedish massage, or some other substitute for the eating of "Long Pig." And the same would apply to that sacramental communion which is, according to Mr Crowley's hypothesis, but a more refined substitute for ritual cannibalism. With the difference that the desired and transferable virtues ceasing to be bodily, to become more and more spiritual, and spiritual conditions being more dominated by expectation than bodily ones, an increase of holiness, or at least of the feeling of holiness was actually obtained by partaking, in their most bodily manner imaginable, of what was believed to be the Divinity's mystic substance, *was actually obtained*, and *undoubtedly still is*.

But will such a sense of spiritual elevation accompany the taking of the Eucharist once it is clearly understood that this rite is not a mystery instituted by Christ as the seal of his unending sacrifice for man's soul or the symbol of his unbroken communion with man's spirit, but a survival, transformed by successive interpretative misconceptions, of the savage's mistaken theory that since eating dead ox furnishes us with bodily strength, so partaking of the flesh of deceased men of mark must similarly endow the eater with some of their characteristic superiority ?

IX

The religious practices and prohibitions of Primitive Man have been shown by Mr Crawley to have had very utilitarian objects. "*The taboo*" he tells us (p. 295), "*is intended to preserve the integrity of human nature, to keep intact the sources of life.*"

So also is that very unreligious modern equivalent, Hygiene; with the difference that it succeeds rather better. Mr Crawley's account of the Taboo-religion, with its thousandfold precautions against "influences" from other individuals, from goods and chattels, from surroundings, from places, from food and drink, even from the Taboo-ist's own wife, who had better have a brief pre-nuptial idyl (if possible with some "holy"

man), for the removal of such "influences," the anthropological chapters of this book and the whole of Mr Crawley's "Mystic Rose" have left in me, at least, an overwhelming impression not only that savages are in constant terror about their life and health, but that the precautions on which they spend much of their time and thought, are just those which, being utterly mistaken, *do not* preserve the "integrity of their nature" or "keep intact the sources of their life." But stop . . . I think I have misunderstood Mr Crawley's thought. Or is it possible that he has misunderstood it a little himself? The *integrity* to be preserved was *not* the integrity of the nature of those poor heathens taken individually, or even collectively; it was not the wholeness of wind and limb which they themselves believed to be threatened by some of those everlasting *influences* (whence *Influenza!*) neither are the *sources of life* which were kept *intact* that which our primæval ancestors discussed in less elevated phraseology. The *integrity* was the *integrity* of Human Nature *sub specie æternitatis*, or, at least, *sub specie historiæ;* and keeping intact the *sources of life* meant, as appears by comparison with other passages of Mr Crawley's writings, desisting from habits, let us say, for politeness' sake, excesses in infanticide, which would have put an end to the race or the tribe altogether.

Of course integrity of Human Nature was not con-

templated by the untutored minds of those poor Indians (or poor whatever they were) when they gave themselves such trouble to invent and observe Taboos entirely miscalculated for their intended purposes. Or rather—since all this matter is extremely complicated, and we must see to no confusion of those various irreducible *planes of thought* above mentioned—or rather what was intended by those primitive people was not in the least the *intention* for which those *taboos* were *really* intended; *that* intention being such as could exist only in the Will . . . no, not of Providence, for we are on the strictly Scientific, Causal (anthropological-comparative-mythological) plane at present, where Providence *can't* be—well, shall we say, that this intention about the *integrity* of human nature and the *intactness* of the *sources of Life*, could exist only in the Will of the Race? or could exist perhaps in the mind of philosophers, more particularly Mr Crawley's and mine?

Because what we really mean is that although those taboo-customs of primitive mankind were not very well adapted to their objects, at least not at all as adapted as good hygienic rules perhaps supplemented by some rough and ready police-measures, yet they produced habits of refraining from definite acts, and of shrinking from general disobedience such as the mere common-sense imperatives of more scientific times could not have produced, particularly when they

themselves did not exist. We mean, at all events, that such Taboo-beliefs and customs begat habits of massive, undiscriminating, automatic acquiescence and repulsion, such as alone could impel and restrain our gross and violent ancestors.

Ancestors? But are you sure it is only ancestors? Why not descendants also, and more especially, why not contemporaries?

X

But before entering upon this question we must return to that essential philosophical distinction, always implied in such apologies for religion: the distinction between the *plane* of scientific (causal) thought and that of *immediate experience, undetermined Will*, morality and expediency, the plane—shall we coin a Bergsonian phrase?— of "lucid instinct." For returning to it we shall find dependent thereon a further development of separate planes; and first and foremost, the *plane of the Subject* and the *plane of the Object*. The subject is I and is also YOU, when YOU are thought of as part of WE, that is to say, when YOU and I are of one mind about something or somebody that is *not* we; the *Object* is, of course, he, she, or it, or they, *Man, Humanity*, in fact anybody who is not *I* nor *you, you* thought of as part of *we;* in fact, the

Object is anybody who is talked *of*, but not talked *to*. Now, it is perfectly evident that on the plane of the *Subject*, it is no use hoping for the moralizing and civilizing results of religious belief (say in the Trinity, the Fall, the Sacraments, to which I really must add Paradise, or at least Hell) by insisting to *ourselves*, to *you* and *me* that such beliefs would make us more moral and more really progressive. The *Subject* always believes exclusively because what he believes is true; besides, the *Subject* is very rarely in need of being improved in any way whatsoever.

But it is, naturally, entirely different when we pass on to the plane of the *Object*. The *Object*, remember, is the person, or group of persons (say *mankind*, for instance) who is being *talked about*, and as such is, of course, not taken into our confidence. It is the most obvious thing in the world, and indeed quite one of the commonest, to remark upon the Object's possession of desirable qualities like those of morality and that happy mixture of conservative tenacity and readiness for improvement which is so necessary for true progress; and to discuss the causal reasons for his having held or still holding the particular religious beliefs which, owing to mere causal reasons, will result in an increase of such a desirable blend of qualities; for I need scarcely remind the Serious Reader (and all my Readers are, I hope, serious *Subjects*, not *Objects*) that so soon as we are on the plane of the *Object*, we

get back to causality and determination, which are evidently out of place when We—You and I—are talking as Subjects.

To return then to the question left behind during this indispensable philosophical *a parte*.

Of course there can be no question (*subjectively* speaking) of our believing in any doctrines because they have conduced and may still conduce to human welfare; and their utility has depended upon their *being believed*. But, having discussed (most *objectively*, of course) all the advantages which accrued, thanks to our ancestors having held these beliefs, it is perfectly legitimate to consider whether similar advantages might not be obtained, or at least retained, by those beliefs continuing to be held by our contemporaries.

The *planes* are being kept separate. The Reader and Mr Crawley and I are talking of other persons, not of ourselves.

And this is how we talk: Mr Crawley doing for the moment the talking, and the reader—perhaps that serious Thinker of the *Church Times* of August 28th, 1903—doing the listening, all of us, *bien entendu Subjects*.

Mr Crawley *loquitur* ("Tree of Life," p. 266).

"*Religion affirms not morality nor altruism, nor science, but health and strength of body and character, physical and moral cleanliness and decency, deference to age, experience and position, principles which are bound up*

with the elemental view of life. . . . It is objected to religion that it has opposed every new movement which in the end made for human development and happiness. This is true, and it is well for humanity that it is. Everything that is new needs testing, and the best test is that of the permanent in human nature. It is no less true that in the end religion has accepted every new movement which has been made for human development and happiness. . . .

"The end of science is knowledge, the end of religion is life. . . .

"Religion stands for progress; not only is it the permanent foundation of character, but it is bound up with the roots of being. . . . Reason has always a tendency to interfere with the normal, and the tendency is kept in check by religion."

There is much truth in this; very much and very practically valuable truth. In fact, so much truth that we had better go and preach it to those believers, just to show them how important it is that they *should* believe.

Tut, tut! You are forgetting that we are discussing belief *objectively;* the believers are *objects of discussion;* you mustn't go and talk to them as if they were *Subjects!* You *can't*—logically can't—talk to, or at least talk *with*, an *Object*. An Object is on a different plane; it's like belonging to a different caste or class: it can't ever be WE.

Mr Crawley continues to quote from page 304:

"*The religious spirit always tends to separate from the rational and to confine itself to the elemental sphere of human energy, while the rational tends to break away from the vital instinct. . . . We can say that religion, becoming itself a cause, has guided and influenced the whole of human evolution. Institutions, when once formed, are preserved by the religious impulse which produced them, and their life is then protected by a veil of religious mystery covering what is holy and not to be defiled.*"

XI

Now that again, I say, is wonderfully true. The only thing is, how about people—not you or me, of course, since *we* cannot be Objects, but people like you or me, who have somehow developed their reason, even to the extent of being able to follow such arguments as the above and such evidence as is furnished by anthropology, the Bull-Roarer sort of thing, I mean. Well, would you say that we are, so to speak, "breaking away from vital instincts?"

Answer: Of course not. Is it not written on page 305 that ". . . *in modern civilization the process of differentiation has gone further, and the religious sphere is narrowed until it embraces, as a rule, merely the subconscious life of the average individual, and the domestic*

relation of the family circle, and not all these, but only such part as is not concerned with practical life."

To be sure! I was forgetting the *sub-conscious* action of religion; the discovery of *sub-consciousness* is really one of the finest achievements of modern thought; you must admit that the rational principle was doing useful work for once in establishing *that*. Or perhaps it was not the rational principle that discovered sub-consciousness?

But without answering this question, Mr Crawley merely emphasizes the importance of sub-consciousness.

"*Psychologists*" he tells us (p. 296), "*are now agreed that instinctive tendencies have paramount influence over our mental processes.*"

So they have; and quite right too!

"*Well then,*" continues Mr Crawley (p. 305) ". . . *Even in cases where the influence of rationalism or expediency has completely excluded religion from the consciousness, yet the material from which it may grow still remains.*"

That's evidently the case with You and Me—I beg your pardon, not you and me precisely, for it's impolite as well as unphilosophical to discuss present company—I mean it's the case with a category of minds of which ours may be considered typical. Pray forgive my interruption.

"*Yet the material from which it may grow still remains*

and gives rise sub-consciously to principles which act essentially though not consciously religious. . . ."

[The whole thing is, of course, *sub-conscious*—the sub-conscious is full of religion, and the principles, although conscious in themselves, are not consciously but sub-consciously religious.] You mean that it gives rise sub-consciously to principles "*which are essentially, though not consciously religious, as in the relations of domestic life, the personal rules of honour and decency, duty, commercial and social, religion still inspires these. In such cases religion has become sub-conscious once more. . . .*"

[Was it sub-conscious originally? I had imagined that all that "elemental view of life," and the taboos, and the sacredness of the Bull-Roarer, had been conscious? But perhaps savages aren't really ever *very* conscious, and, of course, their rationalism is quite rudimentary; not yet at all destructive to normal life.]

"*And*," continues Mr Crawley, "*when we are told that sane and normal characters do actually live without religion, the reply is that they are still religious sub-consciously, and in many cases have turned against the ancient faith through some misconception of its meaning.*"

[Quite so. And Mr Crawley's book is intended to show just them—people like me, for instance, who are religious in their sub-consciousness, the anthropological-mythological facts, and the sociological-evolutional reasons, why they had better cease turning against

their ancient creed and now sub-conscious. For who would turn against the Trinity, the Sacraments, the Fall and the Redemption, the whole catechism in fact, once he understood that their meaning was only to keep up the *Integrity of the Elemental Life* and the *Intactness of the Springs of Existence*, and is, for all philosophical purposes, identical with the meaning of eating the flesh of a *strong man* or *divine person* or any of the other, not quite so quotable, practices of Primitive Peoples?

And this makes me think. . . . Now let me see whether I have got hold of my thought properly, for one had best be careful of one's steps among all these different logical planes, and this *conscious* and *sub-conscious*.

Well, what occurs to me is this: Since, as Mr Crawley says, (and, of course, he must know!) religion was originally *sub-conscious* (so I gather from his words "*religion has become sub-conscious once more*"), and since religion can, in some cases, safeguard the *relations of domestic life*, the personal *rules of honour and decency*, duty, etc., by means of principles not *consciously religious*, and when itself religion has "*become sub-conscious once more*"—why, since the religious spirit is distinguished from the rational spirit by its *sub-conscious* character, may we not trust ourselves in the hands of such *sub-conscious* religion, and have done with the teaching of the catechism? And, of course, that is exactly what Mr Crawley is driving at; for has he not

explicitly said (p. 312), "*True religion cannot live and cannot be understood for what it is, unless its forms are constantly changing.*"

True religion, we now know, is *sub-conscious* religion; and how obvious (now that Mr Crawley has drawn attention to it) that those doctrines imported into *sub-conscious* religion by the historical rationalism of the Hebrews (with all their boring chronological literature) and the metaphysical rationalism of decadent Greece, should be a mere changing form, and the sooner changed away altogether the better. Also as long as all that dogma is believed in, true religion cannot (as Mr Crawley wishes it) "*be understood for what it is.*" Since how can a man who believes the Creed understand that true religion has nothing really to do with God the Father, or the Virgin Mary, or Pontius Pilate, or even with (p. 266) "*morality and altruism*" taught in those historical fabrications the Gospels, but is concerned only with the *Integrity of the Elemental View of Life* and the *Intactness of the Springs of Existence;* and is founded not upon a most partial and local revelation, but upon the universally existing elemental view of life of prehistoric man?

Did I not always think that Mr Crawley and I, being both of us on the subjective plane, and only (strictly) *sub-consciously* religious, must, despite apparent differences, arrive at the same conclusions?

But, behold how little one should trust to the

rational principle even in discussing the uses of the irrational! All this is precisely what Mr Crawley does *not* mean, either consciously or sub-consciously. Those cases where *religion has once more become sub-conscious* and given rise sub-consciously to the *personal rules of honour and decency, duty, commercial and social, and a few other items*, are merely exceptional; they refer only to people like you and me, thinking and willing *subjects*, not *thought of* or *willed about objects*. The *Objects* meanwhile, the people whom we are talking *about* but on no account talking *to*, and who (being like all objects, *determined* and with no will in the matter) must on no account be left alone with a religion "*become once more sub-conscious*," nor can their sub-consciousness be trusted to send up (as ours does, and that of primitive savages did) sub-consciously, principles in support of *honour and decency, duty, commercial and social*, etc., . . . They, unlike us, are in danger of losing their *Elemental View of Life*, and Mr Crawley tells us from what causes (p. 318): "*in the first place, the neglect of the principles of heredity*" (the context shows that Mr Crawley does not refer to the principles of Mr Bateson, Mr Saleeby, or the Laboratory for Eugenics, but rather to the principles of the Primrose League), "*and the encouragement of such practices*[1] *as*

[1] There is no indication of Mr Crawley meaning the practice of drinking beer and spirits, encouraged on the contrary by the present incarnations of the Principle of Heredity.

produce nervous degeneration; and, in the second place, the realization of abstract theories like Socialism."

XII

These Objects we are speaking about, but not speaking to—shall we call these Objects briefly the lower classes?—are, in fact, in terrible danger (their Elemental View of Life, that precious heritage from Bull Roaring days jeopardized) from Socialism. For, as Mr Crawley explains (p. 279), Socialistic proposals make for "*not real development, nor even equalization of opportunity, nor the bringing down of the weak from the high places and the raising of the strong from the dust, but an unfair bestowal upon the weak of larger rewards than they deserve.*" And (p. 276) he adds "*it was no Socialist who died upon the Cross,*" a solid historical fact extremely valuable after Mr Crawley's masterly recapitulation of all the conflicting hypotheses of his fellow-anthropologists and mythologists as to whether any person *did* die upon that particular cross, which cross was itself a derivation from some primæval mythical *Tree of Life*. . . .

But even at the end of this, my puzzled attempt to follow Mr Crawley's conscious or sub-conscious principles, I find myself once more in uncertainty about his real meaning. All those early chapters on

the various scientific attacks upon the truths of Christianity, all that masterly exposition of the theories and hypotheses of Higher Criticism, of History, of Mythology and Anthropology—*can* they, is it possible that they should, be intended by Mr Crawley to demonstrate that the orthodox doctrines are true, and that this array of science is all nonsense? For what should I find on page 310 but the following statement:—

"*The bitter attack upon religion and Christianity, some arguments of which we have surveyed, is chiefly the work of a socialistic party exploiting the claims of the lower classes. . . . The object is to discredit the national religion as the abode of privilege, and the clergy as its depositaries and representatives.*"

Chiefly the work of Socialists! Think of that! Strauss and Colenso, Tylor and Frazer, and all those scholarly persons for whom these names may stand, were in reality but the representatives or the tools of Socialistic agitators!

These revelations of the subconscious activities lurking in scientific consciousness are positively staggering. And as I reel under this great discovery there recurs, bell-like, the question: And the *Tree of Life?* And the *Mystic Rose*, and all about Taboo, and the *Elemental View of Life*, and the Bull Roarer—is all that a trick which the Socialists have been playing (representing no doubt the rationalistic principle)

upon Mr Crawley's own subconscious belief in Christianity ?

No. Mr Crawley's thought is not self-contradictory, and his consciousness and his sub-consciousness are in perfect agreement. The whole matter hinges upon the difference of those two planes so dear to obscurantist philosophy, the plane of Free Will and the Plane of Scientific Thought; the Plane of the Subject who is doing the thinking and the Plane of the Object who is being thought about; in metaphysical terms it hinges upon the eternal (and Obscurantism likes things to be eternal) difference between *We* and *They*. *We*, Mr Crawley, you the Reader and I, who are discussing the matter, are free to believe in Higher Criticism, Anthropological Mythology and Evolution which (p. 322) "*has so to say, brought the necessary elements into their proper places, the motive forces of which we have attempted to describe*"; to believe also in the Elemental View of Life and the close affinity of the religious and the sexual instincts; in the derivation of morality from taboos and the derivation of the Eucharist from the eating of the "*flesh of a strong man or divine person*"; in short we are free to believe in the theories expounded in the *Tree of Life*. But *they*, who are *not* Mr Crawley, nor you, nor I, nor perhaps anyone with whom we should care to discuss these subjects—*they* who are likely to lose respect for the national religion, *they* who cannot

spontaneously appreciate the *remarkable fact* (*p.* 322) "*that the traditional Christian ideal of the organisation of the Universe is so closely parallel, both socially and politically, if the phrase may be used, to our own*" (viz., that of the British Empire;[1] they whose "*claims*" are liable to "exploitation by a *Socialist Party*"—*They* had better be left to the "*instinct*"—"*behind which*" (p. 296) "*there is sound human nature, which leads men to distrust an atheist.*"

In fact, the perusal of the *Tree of Life* is to persuade *Us* that *They* had better not peruse that book, but stick to the Bible and the catechism. "*For*," says Mr Crawley (p. 279 *et seq.*), "*a broad survey of human history and an insight into human possibilities might enable us to maintain . . . that such a use of such a means of control as religion is entirely right and furthers the best interests of the race. For the weaker and less successful members of any community are apt to attribute their grievances to the present social system whereas they are due to the laws of evolution and the inevitable working of natural selection.*"

Such a separation of the planes of the Subject and the

[1] The original arrangement of sentences is as follows: "*The wear and tear of evolution has, so to say, brought the necessary elements into their proper places by a natural process, the motive forces of which we have attempted to describe. Even in the political evolution of the British Empire this may be seen. It is a remarkable fact and more than a coincidence that the traditional Christian ideal of the organization of the Universe is so closely parallel both socially and politically, if the phrase may be used, to our own.*"

Object, of the *We* and the *They*, although (perhaps because !) the highest achievement of apologetic metaphysics is already adumbrated in the *subconsciousness* of peoples still undisturbed in *their Elemental View of Life*: For in the *Tree of Life* (p. 144 *et seq.*) Mr Crawley tells us, on the authority of Messrs Spencer and Gillen, that among the Northern Tribes of Australia the young man who has been "initiated" is taught by the elders that the Bull Roarer is a musical instrument just like any other, and "*that the spirit creature whom up to that time he has regarded as all-powerful is merely a myth, and that such a being does not really exist, and is only an invention of the men to frighten the women and children.*"

So let this be the last but not least lesson of comparative mythology and its sacred Bull Roarer !

XIII

But stay ! there remains another one, although this lesson is not the one intended by the candid mythologist who has been guiding us among the Vital Lies of Primitive Peoples. And this last lesson I will present as a parable.

Ethnographers tell us of the fasts and vigils and mortifications of all kinds, varying from enforced chastity to the elaborate wounding and hacking of

their own body, with which certain savage tribes induce the spirits to favour their bear-stalking. And it is added that these mistaken practices have fostered habits of self-restraint, endurance, discipline and heroism, which those savages might otherwise have lacked. Moreover, when these practices included ritual dances and music and ornament, they have also conduced to æsthetic development. In fact, the only good effect these practices did not have was their intended one upon the bears!

Now, I will readily admit that these great moral results may be obtainable in no other way from savage persons with thoughts entirely bent upon the killing of bears. But, given that we have recognised the desirability of self-restraint, chastity, heroism and art for other purposes than that, might we not be trusted to take about these spiritual gifts a little of the trouble which the savages took about their bears? Or must we keep up not only mistaken views about bears, but an artificial archaicizing interest in these animals?

XIV

Already nearly a century ago, the *Bridgewater Treatises* showed that religion was no longer a matter of assent (in Newman's phrase) but already a matter of *inference*. There must be a God, they argued,

because what could be better made to grasp than the human hand, to see than the human eye, to smell than the human nose ?

More recent investigation has shown that there could quite well have been something better if grasping, seeing, smelling, etc., had been the original purpose of an all-powerful creator. Indeed we have been taught that what is called *grasping*, *seeing* and *smelling* has resulted from the possibilities of the hand, eyes and nose rather than these organs being devised for such purposes. Be this as it may—(and Bergson and others are beginning to tell us that the eye may have been the expression of the blind beast's *will* to see rather than of the blind Cosmos' will to nothing in particular) —be this as it may, the Bridgewater argument is a weapon dangerous to the user when inverted by religious apologists : For you *may* persuade people of the existence of God by showing how very well (or how indifferently well) an eye is suited to see, or a hand to grasp. But to show the extreme suitableness to human requirements of a belief in God is, somehow, scarcely the way to persuade people of God's real and independent existence. It was, after all, Voltaire, and not St Augustine or St Thomas Aquinas who made the cogent remark, " Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer."

CHAPTER III

M. SOREL AND THE "SYNDICALIST MYTH" OF THE GENERAL STRIKE

V'è in questo scopo qualche cosa di religioso e di cristiano : l'attesa di un mondo nuovo, che non verrà se non attraverso i martirii.— Prezzolini, "La Teoria Sindacalista," p. 115.

I

SPEAKING of Professor James and Doctor Schiller, I remarked that it takes bolder men than they to call mistakes mistakes, lies lies, and yet assert that both may have usefulness and goodness and value fully as much as truth, and even occasionally more. The bolder man, the ultra-pragmatist, has actually appeared; not indeed among us "practical" Anglo-Saxons, but among those French folk who are never afraid (for M. Bergson is a half English Jew) of pushing intellectual formulæ to their utmost consequences.

A Frenchman, M. Georges Sorel, has, to use Nietzsche's phrase, *re-valued our valuation* not of truth, but of falsehood; he has ceased to call the useful, efficacious untruth [the vital lie] *truth, truth-in-so-far-forth, truth*

in so far as good for, etc. He has called it, when supremely efficacious, "the myth"; and he has insisted that the myth is potent for good just in proportion as it disdains to be a partial truth. He has not used pragmatism as a convenience, pragmatically hesitating between *yes* and *no*, but, like a thorough believer, a genuine apostle, he has carried his doctrine to its own glorious logical death.

Mysteriously impelled, one might say (as the apostles were impelled to forsake Jesus "in order that the scriptures should be fulfilled"), to give the *reductio ad absurdum* of his own doctrines, he has actually published in the chief *Syndicalist* paper, and cheek by jowl with furious preachings of the *General Strike*, a series of essays setting forth that the General Strike must be preached because it is an unrealizable myth, and because only unrealizable myths can beget unhesitating belief and wholesale action.

II

"Nous vivons de l'ombre d'une ombre. De quoi vivra-t-on après nous?"

So wrote Renan, repeating the very same words in two separate contexts. Monsieur Sorel has been not only a student of those historical and psychological "origins" of Christianity which took up so much of

Renan's activity; he has been a student of Renan himself, and in quoting that famous passage he is giving us the genealogy and also the premiss of his own theory of the *Syndicalist Myth.*

The " Ombre d'une Ombre " occurs, as I have said, twice in M. Renan's works. Let me put together the two contexts which happen to complete each other. In the Preface to *Feuilles Détachées* we read: " *Nous pouvons nous passer de religion parceque d'autres en ont eu pour nous. Ceux qui ne croient pas sont entraînés par la masse plus ou moins croyante; mais le jour où la masse n'aurait plus d'élan, les braves eux-mêmes iraient mollement à l'assaut. On tirera beaucoup moins d'une humanité ne croyant pas à l'immortalité de l'âme que d'une humanité y croyant.*

" *Les personnes religieuses vivent d'une ombre. Nous vivons de l'ombre d'une ombre. De quoi vivra-t-on après nous? . . .*

" *Ne désespérous pas sur la dose ni sur la formule de la religion; bornons-nous à ne pas la nier, gardons la catégorie de l'inconnu, la possibilité de rêver. Il ne faut pas que la ruine devenue inévitable des religious prétendues révélées, entraîne la disparition du sentiment religieux.*"

Here we have the assertion that religious belief is necessary for the thorough and sufficient output of militant moral energy: " *on tirera beaucoup moins d'une humanité ne croyant pas à l'immortalité de l'âme*

que d'une humanité y croyant." Then we are told that what religious people live off is an unreality—"*les personnes religieuses vivent d'une ombre.*" Remark that it is the religious believers Renan is speaking of; not us who no longer believe and who are described as living only on *the shadow of the shadow*, while the shadow itself is kept for the true believers. And thirdly, after asking "dequoi vivra-t-on après nous?" M. Renan tells us that we must not allow the destruction of the religious doctrines hitherto taught to deprive us of this necessary religious spirit. And again he repeats that religious belief is of the nature of a shadow, admonishing us to keep "*la catégorie de l'inconnu, la possibilité de rêver.*" Then, in the Preface of the "Dialogues Philosophiques," we again get—"*Nous vivons de l'ombre d'une ombre. De quoi vivra-t-on après nous?*" but with the immediate addition: "*une seule chose est sûre; c'est que l'humanité tirera de son sein tout ce qui est nécessaire en fait d'illusions pour qu'elle remplisse ses devoirs et accomplisse sa destinée. Ell n'y pas failli jusqu'ici; elle n'y faillira pas dans l'avenir.*"

Now let us come to M. Georges Sorel. Mankind, he tells us, being always in need of such illusions—shadows of shadows—fertile in virtue and heroism, has perpetually made and remade them in the past, and it is busy at the same work in the present. To the great historical myths like that of early Messianic Christianity

and the Humanitarianism of the French Revolution is now being added, to renew the world's needful ideals and militant morality, the Syndicalist Myth of the General Strike.

III

Before expounding the theory of the *Syndicalist Myth*, it will be necessary to explain or recall to my English reader the nature of the very un-English form of Socialism which takes its name in Latin countries from the Syndicates, or, as we should call them, Trade Unions. I have brought in this word *trade unions* in order to forestall the reader's natural tendency to imagine that *Syndicalism* and *Trade Unionism* are the same. They are absolutely different,[1] as M. Sorel and his Italian exponent, Signor Prezzolini, repeatedly insist; indeed, the best way of understanding the Syndicalism of Latin countries is to oppose it to British Trade Unionism. For the British Trade Union is a corporate body within the State, employing its special corporate action for special corporate purposes, that is

[1] "*Que la grève générale ne soit pas populaire dans l'Angleterre contemporaine, c'est un pauvre argument à faire valoir contre la portée historique de l'idée, car les Anglais se distinguent par une extraordinaire incompréhension de la lutte de classe... la corporation, privilegiée ou protégée au moins par les lois, leur apparaît toujours comme l'idéal de l'organisation ouvrière. C'est pour l'Angleterre que l'on a inventé le terme* d'aristocratie ouvrière *pour parler des syndiqués*" (Sorel: "Refléxions sur la Violence," p. 90).

to say, in corporate bargains with employers; and its members, besides being members of the union, are also parts of other collectivities, members of a church, a township, or a political party; above all, citizens of a State employing their civic powers, municipal and parliamentary votes, like any other citizens. On the contrary the member of a Latin Syndicate (at least, of a thorough-paced Syndicalist Syndicate) is, or wishes to be, nothing but a member of that Syndicate, and through it only of whatever confederacy of similar Syndicates may have been formed in or outside his country. *In or outside* his country, but not recognised as *in* or *outside* of it; for the Syndicalist recognises only his Syndicate and confederacy of Syndicates, and the *Nation*, the *State*, does not exist for him: he pays the taxes, obeys the laws, serves in the armies of this country or that, but only as a matter of compulsion, and denying all its claims. Seen from the standpoint of the State or Nation, he is an Anarchist (the cosmopolitan Syndicalists of Chicago seem to call themselves by that name);[1] seen from inside his own Syndicate, he is a completely unindividualistic part of a collectivity; even as the primitive Christian, absolutely submissive to his church, was a rebel in the eyes of the Roman official. But the Syndicalist proletariat is not a new State within an old State which it disregards; it is a new State erecting itself in oppo-

[1] *Cf.* Hapgood's most interesting "The Spirit of Labour."

sition to an old State which it intends to destroy and absorb.

And to destroy and absorb without employing any of the means furnished by that old State—any means, in fact, except its own. Herein lies the peculiarity of Syndicalism, its superficial resemblance to Anarchism, and its essential difference from all other forms of Socialism: it rejects, not only all theories of compromise and evolution, but all employment of political and municipal machinery. This distinctive characteristic of Syndicalism becomes easier to grasp when we remark that it exists principally in countries which, having long possessed a well-organised State-socialist party, have actually seen Socialists, if not Socialism, in power, and have seen, therefore, that, once in power, once installed in municipalities or parliaments, or even in cabinets, they have failed to carry out the wholesale promises made to electors. This inability, doubtless often turning to unwillingness, has discredited parliamentary Socialism in the eyes of the proletariat, let alone in those of rival and unofficial demagogues; and the very compromises and concessions of the *bourgeoisie* have been interpreted as attempts to corrupt, to enervate, and hoodwink Socialism. Hence the attitude of the Syndicalist proletariat, or rather, of course, of the leaders, organisers, and theorisers of Syndicalism: they will not hear of Fabians, of sympathising bourgeois, of intellectuals, of members of

municipalities and parliaments. Moreover, the proletariat recognises no bonds and no differences of nationality; no duty towards the State (Syndicalists are logically anti-militarists), as it accepts no advantages from the State. It refuses to employ the mechanism of capitalistic society even against itself; it makes war on capitalism without using capitalism's weapons. The Syndicalist proletariat is to conquer and suppress and replace the capitalistic State by systematic abstention and opposition; and its means of doing so are inherent in the Syndicate constitution and in the fact of the labourers being labourers. Labour is going to besiege and starve out Capitalism. And the battles which must be fought in the great class warfare are what we call *strikes*.

These strikes may be ostensibly to gain this momentary concession or that, even as a skirmish or a siege in other wars may aim directly at securing a position of vantage or seizing stores or capturing a hostile troop; but their true importance, and the reason for sacrificing to them all individual motives, will depend upon their leading to a final, a distant, an indefinable, Armageddon called the General Strike.

Thus has arisen, partly from Marxian and Anarchist theorisings, and partly from the practical conflict of Labour with Capital, a feeling of class warfare, an expectation of the day of liberation, retribution, and triumph, of a coming of the working man's kingdom

of heaven on earth. We have all read some of the literature of Catastrophic Socialism, from Morris's "News from Nowhere" to Kropotkin's "Conquest of Bread," and we all know that ideas such as these have been published in thousands of pamphlets and journals, and preached in millions of meetings and clubs, for the last half-century and more. Moreover, we have learned from Zola, and from the far more romantic "human documents" of sociological students of proletarian life on the Continent and in America, that with the habit of strike, with the thought of class-warfare, and the expectation of a Socialistic or Anarchistic catastrophe, there has grown up among the working classes something amounting to a new religion and a new kind of altruistic ethic, whose watchword is "solidarity," and whose first, and occasionally sole, commandment is, "Thou shalt not be a blackleg." [1]

When will the general strike be brought about, with its destruction of the capitalistic *régime* and its kingdom of proletarian righteousness? How soon? Where? In what way? Perhaps in a remote future, perhaps in a living man's lifetime, perhaps to-morrow, perhaps . . . ? But everyone feels that come it must, and that only by renouncing all other desires, by sacrificing all individual superiorities and advantages, by postponing wife and child to the Union and the Cause, by lenience to all the weaknesses and vice of faithful comrades, by

[1] *Cf.* Hapgood, "The Spirit of Labour."

ruthlessness to all dissidents and strike-breakers, by refusal of all compromise with capitalistic society and its institutions—in fact, only by the unanimous girding up of loins, the watching and praying and preaching of the working man, can class warfare be kept up and the General Strike brought about.

All this is well known to us of the *bourgeoisie*, known with hatred or terror or sympathy and admiration; known also, by some of us, in its pathos and grandeur, with sadness and indignation that so much religion and heroism should be wasted or exploited.

M. Sorel, who is not a workman, but a retired official, and, as I have already remarked, a philosophical student of Renan, has seen it all with other eyes :—

"*Nous savons*," he writes ("Réflexions sur la Violence," p. 95), "*nous savons que la grève générale est bien ce que j'ai dit, un mythe dans lequel le socialisme s'exprime tout entier, une organization d'images capables d'évoquer instinctivement tous les sentiments qui correspondent aux diverses manifestations de la guerre engagée par le socialisme contre la société moderne. Les grèves ont engendré dans le prolétariat les sentiments les plus nobles, les plus profonds et les plus moteurs qu'il possède; la grève générale les groupe tous dans un tableau d'ensemble et, par leur rapprochement, donne à chacun son maximum d'intensité; faisant appel à des souvenirs très cuisants de conflits particuliers, elle colore d'une vie intense tous les détails de la composition presentée à la conscience.*

" Nous obtenons ainsi cette intuition du socialisme que le langage ne pouvait pas nous donner d'une manière parfaitement claire—et nous l'obtenons dans un ensemble perçu instantanément." [1]

Monsieur Renan had wondered out of what illusions the world would thenceforward extract its virtues. " Nous vivons de l'ombre d'une ombre," he had written in that much-quoted passage, " de quoi vivra-t-on après nous ? " Monsieur Sorel answers, " On this " —and he christens it (in more senses than one) the Socialist Myth of the General Strike.

IV

Here I must parenthesize and forestall a very natural question : Why should the General Strike be a *myth*, and not a coming reality ?

In the first place, and more generally, because in the multiplicity of historic factors, many unguessed-of and most of them incalculable, it is next to impossible that anything *should* happen as it is foreseen, and still less as it is foreseen by multitudes of ignorant and passionate men.

The Syndicalist idea of the General Strike is essentially opposed to all the hopes of " evolutional " Socialism ; it excludes the co-operation of unintended

[1] " *C'est la connaissance parfaite de la philosophie Bergsonienne.*"

factors, it disdains unexpected improvements; it is, for all its vagueness, a programme, and history teaches us that programmes are never accomplished except by compromise with other programmes; but you cannot imagine the martyrs of Nero's persecution going to the stake either on the understanding that Christianity should absorb Pagan institutions, or in the vague hope that, given the condition of antique civilization, "something was sure to turn up." No: the Kingdom of Heaven, and nothing short of it, had to come, and to come through the very sufferings of those who believed in it. Similarly with the hopes embodied in the notion of a catastrophic end of the capitalistic régime.

But there are also special reasons why the General Strike can never be more than a myth. It must remain a myth chiefly because (and whatever remains obscure in M. Sorel's text is thoroughly cleared up by his commentator, Signor Prezzolini) the General Strike must not be conceived as a mere revolution, a fine Bastille day, even a Reign of Terror, after which things return to a mitigated *status quo*. It is not even a mere dramatic finale, a *Götterdämmerung* of the bourgeois Olympus. It is (like the coming of Christ and the Judgment of the Quick and the Dead) essentially the beginning of a new *régime*; that is to say, of the absorption of all the achievements of capitalistic civilization by the victorious proletariat. The war of classes will end by the establishment of one single

class of syndicated working men. Now such a taking over by the proletariat of the complex functions, the enormous economic machinery of capitalism (not production only, but credit and exchange), would require that the proletariat should already have risen to the level of the " directing " classes ; short of which the defeated *bourgeoisie* would return to power in the disguise of foremen and organizers, or a new aristocracy would arise out of the proletariat itself ; or—what would be quite as bad—all the accumulated wealth of the world would be wasted and destroyed.

" *In other words,*" sums up Signor Prezzolini, " *once the working classes are able to carry through their General Strike they will no longer require to have it ; but they must go on attempting their General Strike . . . well, as long as a General Strike is impossible to carry through.*"

" *The so-called General Strike,*" continues Signor Prezzolini elsewhere, " *can therefore never be general. Its function is educational. It will simply, and by grouping them together, educate the majority of working men to mutual knowledge and helpfulness, teach them to free themselves from all tutelage, to reject the advances of over-friendly capitalism, and finally, it will enable them to constitute, by their various associations, the rudimentary organs of a new social organism.*

" *To liberate all classes, to destroy all false ideologies, to unite labour with the faculty of directing it, means the production of a new human being : and this new mankind*

is produced by the will of Socialism, or, more strictly speaking, of Syndicalism " (quell' uomo che è la volizione del Socialismo, o meglio del Sindacalismo).

The *will of Syndicalism*, but not necessarily the will of one, or many, or all, or any of the syndicalized proletarians. It is not they, paying their wages into union funds and starving in strikes and out-locks, who want the " new human being "—spoken of by Signor Prezzolini. *The will of Syndicalism* is . . . well, first and foremost, it is the *will* which Syndicalists, those who really believe in the General Strike, happen not to have. This will is the name for a tendency which philosophers find in certain historical events, a tendency which is a mere abstract generalization from what has actually happened (or, in the case of Syndicalism, can happen), and which these philosophers like to contemplate, to personify, and (being, indeed, only in their own consciousness) to project, as a sort of mystic will, into the unconscious depths of . . . one scarcely knows whether individuals or the race—but, at all events, of people conscious only of something quite different.

When philosophers of this kind speak of the *will* of, say, Syndicalism, the only certainty is that they are talking of what *they will to think about*: for philosophers love to ascend to the high places, whence nations and centuries are seen in tidy fore-shortening and colour patterns, totally unlike what any real thing

could ever be; high places where they interrogate the titanic abstractions "World-will" and "Race-will" —and now "Proletarian-will"—whom they have made out of their own brain fumes, their own burnt pinch of historical mummy-dust, and with whom they feel, as they truly are, in company worthy of themselves. It is these "wills" who, taking over the business of the departed gods—it is these *wills*, particularly the historical ones, which, so to speak, *will* the myths; that is to say, *will* that an enormous lot of people, say the whole Syndicalist proletariat, should strive and struggle to attain something which it does not intend, under the impression that it is struggling for something which it does intend. . . . Since that, when all is said and done, is what Monsieur Sorel means in talking of the Syndicalist Myth.

V

(*Parenthetical and Marginal*)

Since Monsieur Sorel is always adjuring us to look at things from the "historic standpoint," I may as well remark that Monsieur Sorel's *myth theory* is itself historically explicable as a violent reaction from the theories of so-called "Historic Materialism" for which Marx and other Socialists (like Loria) are so largely responsible. The philosophic, like the artistic, mind

is very easily bored with any dominant fashion.) Socialists had hitherto explained everything by mere economic pressure and practical interests; the natural revulsion has been that the world's changes are now explained by "ideas"—and "ideals"—and, to be more unpractical still, by myths. Formerly, to use a homely simile, dreams were explained as dependent upon the state of the digestion; now, the digestion is explained to depend upon mental causes. And thus *ad libitum*.

VI

And now let us hear Monsieur Sorel expound his own theory of the efficacy of myths:—

"*L'experience nous prouve que des constructions d'un avenir indéterminé dans le temps peuvent avoir une grande efficacité et n'avoir que bien peu d'inconvénients lorsqu'elles sont d'une certaine nature; cela a lieu quand il s'agit de mythes dans lesquels se retrouvent les tendances les plus fortes d'un peuple, d'un parti, ou d'une classe, tendances qui viennent à se présenter à l'esprit avec l'insistance d'instincts dans toutes les circonstances de la vie, et qui donnent un aspect de pleine réalité à des espoirs d'action prochaine sur lesquels se fonde la réforme de la volonté. Nous savons que ces mythes sociaux n'empêchent d'ailleurs nullement l'homme de savoir tirer profit de toutes les observations qu'il fait*

au cours de sa vie, et ne font point obstacle à ce qu'il remplisse ses occupations normales.

"Les premiers Chrétiens attendaient le retour du Christ et la ruine totale du monde païen, avec l'instauration du royaume des Saints, pour la fin de la première génération. La catastrophe ne se produisit pas, mais la pensée chrétienne tira un tel parti du mythe apocalyptique que certains savants contemporains voudraient que toute la prédication de Jésus eut porté sur ce sujet unique."[1]

Monsieur Renan had not thought it necessary to explain whether mankind ever lived on a substance; the distinction made by him between the diet of religious believers and of us who have lost our religious beliefs is between a shadow (*une ombre*) first-hand and a shadow (*l'ombre d'une ombre*) second-hand. Monsieur Sorel adds the information that, so far as moral growth is concerned, reality must not be considered sufficiently nutritious. That is the gist of the pages just quoted. But lest they should have left the reader unpersuaded, I will add a few explanations, and an illustration not taken from the historical standpoint.

Suppose you want a child to move off from whatever occupation, doubtless mischievous, he may be engaged in. If you say, "Go to the back-door, and you will see the milkman filling the milk-cans," you are making but a very slight appeal to the child's imagination and sentiment, and you are running the risk that the milk-

[1] "Réflexions sur la Violence," p. 92.

man and the cans may happen not to be there at this moment; so there are two chances against you, one that the child will not budge, and the other that the child will be very angry and never again believe a word of what you say. But if you say, "My dear young friend, there is a pot of pure gold at the foot of the rainbow, and you would be truly wise to go and secure it at once," you will, or, at least, you *may*, get the child to walk for miles in the direction you tell him, and he can never be sure that the pot of gold was not just a little further off.

This homely simile explains the superior efficacy of myths in cases where you yourself are inventing them, like Plato's guardians making up "noble lies" for the preservation of the Commonwealth, or like those *Bonzes* and *Old Men of the Mountain* to whom the eighteenth century, voiced by Voltaire's enchanting stories, ascribed the malignant and selfish invention of religious creeds of every kind. Now, of course, we moderns have got beyond such silly notions (*simplismes*, the French call them), and the history of civilization and religion (even when treated by infidels like Buckle and Michelet) has made it obvious that there never have been such deliberate virtuous or villainous impostures. Add to this that a course of Pragmatism (and you can be a Pragmatist without ever having heard of Professor James or Mr Schiller) has prepared us all for the practical, if not theoretical, recognition that it is

quite as easy, and a deal more efficacious, to begin by believing oneself whatever others had better believe is *true in so far forth* and according to its "*fruits for life.*"[1] Monsieur Sorel's myth is therefore your thoroughly up-to-date myth, psychologically correct, Bergsonian withal, for Monsieur Sorel is an avowed follower of the great vitalist psychologist, of the philosopher, as they call him, *of action.* The myth with which Monsieur Sorel deals is therefore the spontaneous myth,[2] the myth which people make up for themselves, or accept from one of themselves because they might themselves have made it up; or rather, it is the myth which people would spontaneously make out of something presented by some one else who meant something different; for history shows that the Primitive Church had its Evangelists, and that Syndicalism has its Journalists, of neither of whom the historic student can affirm that he knows exactly how much they did or do believe. Be this as it may, the myth as enthroned by M. Sorel is efficacious in begetting emotion and action just in proportion as it expresses men's desires and dreams, in proportion as it is symptomatic of an already existing tendency in a given direction. One's myth is, so to speak, Oneself,

[1] *Cf.* W. James, "Will to Believe," "Pragmatism," and "Varieties of Religious Experience"; Schiller, "Humanism," etc.

[2] Prezzolini, "La Teoria Sindacalista," p. 133: "*Lo sciopero generale è una delle più spontanee idee nella classe operaia, vera figlia della coscienza e dell' azione sua.*"

and in so far familiar and comforting; whereas Reality is something outside, indifferent, and frequently hostile; at the very best, Reality is not busy smoothing one's pillow or waiting to answer the bell.

Moreover (and here we return to the pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow), a myth is eminently vague, not limited in time and space (being as much an emotion as a thought), so that it can fit individual requirements as well as collective ones, and, what is most important of all, never disappoint those requirements, similar or dissimilar, by realization.

For, of course, the essential characteristic of a myth is that, whatever else it may produce (and M. Sorel assures us that it can produce all the greatest things visible from the "historical standpoint"), the one thing which it cannot produce is its own realization. It is part of the Messianic Myth that the Messiah never makes his appearance; did not the Messianic Jews crucify Jesus Christ for saying he had come? It is part of the mythical character of the "General Strike" that it will never come off. Like that, you can continue expecting, and getting the greatest output of sanctity and heroism out of your expectation. You can even, as Signor Prezzolini has told us, get the Superman whom you do not expect or want at all, if only you go on expecting something else, like the General Strike, with sufficient self-denying fervour.

VII

As a matter of fact, therefore, we are dealing not with one messianic expectation, but with two. There is the messianic expectation of the General Strike and the Coming of the Kingdom of Labour, an expectation whose realization is believed in by the Syndicalist Proletariat; and there is the messianic expectation of the coming of the new Proletarian Humanity and its realization through belief in the General Strike; and this messianic expectation is also very genuinely believed to be really realizable; only it is entertained not by the Proletariat but by Monsieur Sorel and the intellectual bourgeois his disciples.

And the puzzling (and yet true!) circumstances about these equally truly existing messianic expectations (we must not call both myths!) is that their relation is such that while M. Sorel's expectation of the coming of the Proletarian New Humanity is strictly dependent for realization on the Proletarian expectation of the General Strike, this Proletarian expectation of the General Strike would come to an instant end were the Proletariat to accept or even to understand Monsieur Sorel's expectation of the coming of the Proletarian New Humanity.

VIII

These almost metaphysical complications make the situation just a trifle delicate, and M. Sorel's book is full of fear lest the effects of the Syndicalist Myth—nay, the Syndicalist Myth's very existence—may be jeopardised by lack of faith and fervour; indeed, we shall see that the "Violence" which he takes for his title is intended to keep up the requisite fury of class warfare and the consequent output of millenarian virtues.

It is here that *Syndicalism*—meaning thereby not the mere reality of existing syndicates and syndicated workmen, but the personified unconscious essence which guides that trumpery reality in a direction it little dreams of—it is here that Syndicalism steps in, showing itself to be the true historical *Will*, and a Will mysteriously related to Bergson's Evolution Créatrice.[1]

"*Le syndicalisme*," writes Sorel (p. 89), "*s'efforce d'employer des moyens d'expression qui projetteut sur les choses une pleine lumière, qui les posent parfaitement*

[1] "*Cette philosophie par laquelle Bergson a renouvelé la psychologie, M. Sorel et la Nouvelle Ecole en font l'application à la Sociologie et à l'Economie politique. L'opposition du* moi superficiel *et du* moi profond, *du mécanique et du vivant, ils la trouvent.... en science sociale dans l'opposition entre l'*utopie *et le* mythe; *en politique dans l'antagonisme entre le réformisme légal et la revolution totale.*" *G.* Guy-Grand: "La Philosophie Syndicaliste" in "Annales de la Jeunesse."

à la place que leur assigne leur nature et qui accusent toute la valeur des forces mises en jeu. Au lieu d'atténuer les oppositions, il faudra, pour suivre l'orientation syndicaliste, les mettre en relief ; il faudra donner un aspect aussi solide que possible aux groupements qui luttent entre eux ; enfin ou représentera les mouvements des masses révoltées de telle maniere que l'âme des révoltés en reçoive une impression pleinement maitrisante."

"*Une pleine lumière!*" writes M. Sorel. But it is the light produced by the fashionable burner patented by Bergson ("c'est la *connaissance parfaite* de la Philosophie Bergsonienne," M. Sorel informs us, in a footnote, p. 95) and, like that of the place referred to by Job, it is *light which is as darkness*. For remark that the lucidity of the arrangement is to consist in suppressing any troublesome "indécisions" such as parliamentary Socialists (*farceurs, bavards, menteurs*, and moreover admired by *décadents*!) may have left in the mind of the working man; and in making the parties in conflict seem as conflicting as possible, doubtless by suppressing all mention of the many interests which, as human beings, as consumers, and even as employers and employed they actually have in common. Any such reality is to be left out in that dynamogenetic myth, left to return (*expelle furca* one may say of reality, since reality *is* nature) and revenge itself by fissuring and rending the fine myth-built edifice. The *lucidity* recommended by M. Sorel

consists in "representing the movement of the revolutionary masses in such a way that the soul of the insurgent shall receive a completely overpowering impression" (*en reçoive une impression pleinement maîtrisaute*). Language, being but a creation of mere superficial logic and a traitor to the "profound reality of things," must somehow be supplemented for the production of such adequate effects.

"*Le langage, ne saurait suffire pour produire de tels résultats d'une manière assurée, il faut faire appel à des ensembles d'images capables d'evoquer* en bloc et par la seule intuition (*Sorel's underlining*) *avant toute analyse réfléchie la masse des sentiments qui correspondent aux diverses manifestations de la guerre engagée par le socialisme contre la société moderne.*"

It is not interesting to meet again, after having become acquainted with it in our studies of Professor James's views on mysticism, and of Father Tyrrell's "Religious Idea" that venerable primæval conglomerate of objective fact and subjective associations and emotions? That "connaissance parfaite de la Philosophie Bergsonienne," that "ensemble d'images capables d'évoquer en bloc *et par la seule intuition* (Mr Sorel has even furnished the very italics I wanted) avant toute analyse réfléchie la masse des sentiments qui correspondent, etc., etc"? Here the sentence ends off—"correspondent aux diverses manifestations de la guerre engagée par le socialisme contre la société

moderne "—but it might equally well have been tailed off into connexion with Father Tyrell's " Catholic Idea " or with Mr Ernest Crawley's " Elemental Points of View " described as a panacea for preserving a Tory Church and State from the dangers of Rationalists and Socialists.

For here is the mischief (the eternal drawback of all Vital Lies) that everybody equally can deal in " ensembles d'images capables d'évoquer en bloc et par la seule intuition avant toute analyse réfléchie," that is to say, in confusions of *what is* with *what is hoped or feared*, in *truths-in-so-far-forth* and all the various devices of (however unofficial) *Will-to-believe* Pragmatism. Indeed, as Signor Prezzolini remarked about the Modernists, the only objection to such *will-to-believe Pragmatism* is that one cannot keep it for one's own exclusive use. And, therefore, in the long run, we have all of us to invoke objective reality, facts which take none of our habits and likings into consideration, as a final appeal against our opponents and our opponents' " beliefs " and " myths."

IX

As regards our Syndicalist Myth, these objective and opposing factors are already giving M. Sorel a good deal of annoyance, and even anxiety.

The dangers besetting the present and the future are naturally not those insisted on by orthodox economists, for M. Sorel, like, I suppose, all Syndicalists, proceeds from Marx and takes all Marx's economics for granted, much as the Messanist Christians of the first century took for granted the Law and the Prophets.

The powers of evil dreaded by M. Sorel are various: they are the spontaneous tendency to social improvement, the more accommodating spirit of capitalistic society, the Socialistic hankerings of parliamentary governments, above all, the growing humanitarianism of an enfeebled *bourgeoisie*. These nefarious realities must be checked at once in the interest of the myth which alone can bring us the new mankind and its new virtues—"*for*," writes M. Sorel (p. 45), "*si . . . les bourgeois égarés par les* blagues *des prédicateurs de morale ou de sociologie, reviennent à un idéal de médiocrité conservatrice, cherchent à corriger les* abus *de l'économie et veulent rompre avec la barbarie de leurs anciens, alors une partie des forces qui devaient produire la tendance du capitalisme est employée à l'enrayer, du hasard s'introduit et l'avenir du monde est complètement indéterminé. Cette indétermination augmente encore si le prolétariat se convertit à la paix sociale en même temps que ses maîtres. . . .*"

Indéterminé, of course, in the sense of not being determined in accordance with M. Sorel's wishes,

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Can any historically-minded philosopher endure the

gradual substitution of such selfish and comfortable lucidity for that "connaissance parfaite de la Philosophie Bergsonienne"? M. Sorel for one is going to oppose himself with all his might to any such intrusion of "hasard"; and so he preaches recourse to "La Violence," violence on the part of the proletariat for the sake of rousing violence on the part of the *bourgeoisie*, in order to keep up the violence of the proletariat and Da Capo. For without the "connaissance parfaite" of a state of class warfare, you cannot get your crop of heroic and saintly virtues, your moral regeneration of the world, and your New Humanity willed by Syndicalism.

We can now understand the apparent contradiction of M. Sorel foretelling the course of historical events, and putting out so much zeal lest that course be deflected.

"*Marx supposait*," writes M. Sorel (p. 48), "*que la bourgeoisie n'avait pas besoin d'être excitée a employer la force; nous sommes en présence d'un fait nouveau et fort imprévu: une bourgeoisie qui cherche à atténuer la force. Faut-il croire que la conception Marxiste est morte? Nullement*," answers M. Sorel, betraying perhaps more doubt in the answer than in the question—"*car la violence prolétarienne entre en scène en même temps que la paix sociale prétend apaiser les conflits. Non seulement la violence prolétarienne peut assurer la révolution future*" (*i.e.*, by frightening the bourgeoisie

into keeping up the necessary amount of class hatred), "*mais encore elle semble être le seul moyen dont disposent les nations européennes abruties par l'humanitarisme pour retrouver leur ancienne énergie.*"

That famous energy! The energy which Gobineau, then Nietzsche, and now Monsieur Sorel (let alone innumerable other literary persons incapable of hurting a fly) are always looking for in the past and in the future; one might almost suspect because they do not feel sufficient thereof in themselves to recognise it in the much maligned present!

X

And now we have got to the element of humorousness, which, by a merciful dispensation, rarely fails to grow up, a refreshing prison flower, in some cranny of even the grimmest edifice wherein systematic thinkers enclose themselves and their readers.

Violence is requisite to keep up the Myth; Violence to shake up those miserable bourgeois (*veûles, abrutis*, etc., etc.) who have not the spirit needed for their part of Antichrist, and who, left to themselves, might leave off making the modicum of martyrs necessary for the upkeep of the Messianic Syndicalist Myth. Violence is wanted!

Violence (does he not call his book *Réflexions* there-

upon, and give us, heaven knows, Violence of vituperation enough behind that red-waving title ?), and once more Violence ! But not *really* very much of it. Nor in the least of a bad kind : just a little will do the job, skilfully applied, made the most of ; but, taken in itself, not really enough to put on the point of a knife and choke a dog withal. For do not forget that we are in the land of myths, and that a myth of violence may produce a myth of bourgeois reaction without resorting to coarse material facts : the facts, as usual when we deal with myths, are to be employed merely as symbols—" nur ein Gleichniss," as Goethe's Chorus Mysticus sings with so much sociological acumen ; or, in more modern and æsthetic language, it is a question of getting the " values," the values of violence, as an artist, by skilful contrasts, gets the full values of a tropical mid-day out of a lick of whitey-brown body colour.

Hence M. Sorel (p. 168) enters upon a long historical inquiry to prove, more or less on Harnack's authority, that the actual number of early Christian martyrs was very small ; deducing from the efficacy of these few but telling acts of faith, that, analogically . . . well, that the Syndicalist Myth of Ruthless Class Warfare and Universal Cataclysm will prove to require, for efficacy similar to that which established Christianity, only a comparatively small number of deeds of fury on the part of the working classes : the terror-inspiring

clash and clangour will be out of all proportion to the real breakage.

" *Nous pouvons donc concevoir que le socialisme soit parfaitement révolutionnaire encore qu'il n'y ait que des conflits courts et peu nombreux, pourvu que ceux-ci aient une force suffisante pour pouvoir s'allier à l'idée de la grève générale : tous les évènements apparaîtront alors sous une forme amplifiée, et, les notions catastrophiques se maintenant, la scission sera parfaite.*"

So that, while class warfare will be in all imaginations (*la scission parfaite* means each class considering the other as an irreconcilable and villainous enemy), " *la civilisation n'est point menacée de succomber sous les conséquences d'un développement de la brutalité.*"

Thus does the apostle of proletarian violence forestall " l'objection que l'on adresse souvent aux révolutionnaires."

Surely one of the most admirable peculiarities of the pragmatistic spirit, even where not officially proclaimed, is this engaging tendency to make light of obstacles; and, even in the moments of utmost partisanship, to show itself ready to oblige everybody.

XI

Be it as it may with the exact dose of violence, M. Sorel adjures the proletariat to apply it in the

interests of the Syndicalist myth, of the War of Classes, and the coming of the New Humanity, himself apparently regardless of the circumstance that, once they have understood that the Myth is only a myth, these working men may refuse to expend their violence or anything else in its service. For there is a second humorous element in the matter, and that is shown in the original publication of the "Réflexions sur la Violence" in one of the principal periodicals intended to enlighten and discipline the working man. M. Sorel's belief in the efficacy of his Myth is so complete that he cannot refrain from explaining that it is a Myth to the very people who are required to believe that it is not one!

XII

M. Sorel's acute and imaginative mind has been busied especially with the *lessons of history*, those lessons which will never cease to be a field for philosophical discussion, because they consist for the most part in merely verbal analogies. Among these many alleged lessons of history there is one which does seem irrefutable (so long, of course, as the reverse is irrefutable also!), namely, that a great many great results have come about by people having striven sufficiently hard to bring about something entirely different. It is a safe prediction that something will

come of the Socialistic strivings of our own day and of the days of our fathers, both of the Parliamentary and the Syndicalist sort, both of M. Jaurès' and of M. Sorel's pattern; and it is safer still to predict that the *something coming* will not be exactly like what these various strivings are deliberately aiming at. For, in the first place, Parliamentary Socialism and Syndicalistic Socialism must have different effects whose co-existence will produce an unintended compound; and, secondly, the strivings of all the various kinds of Socialism (let alone Anarchism also!) will have to combine, in however hostile a spirit, with the strivings of Capitalism, and perhaps with the strivings of other hitherto uncatalogued sociological and political factors. You cannot let loose so much hope and fear, so much effort to take, and so much effort to keep, without the face of civilization being considerably changed by it all. That much seems a lesson of history, and, moreover, a logical necessity, although only a Socialist (Parliamentary or Syndicalist, as the case may be) or a Bourgeois Reactionary can feel perfectly sure whether the *something* will more favour collectivism or capitalism; and it is mere personal guesswork to say, as I should be tempted to do, that the new *régime* may be some yet unknown integration of capital and labour in the same individuals, and may be brought about by the end of class warfare in a united resistance of all consumers against the threatened tyranny of the

bureaucracy on the one hand, and of the monopolistic corporations of capitalists or of labourers on the other.

In this sense, something is sure to come out of everything, and in the case under contemplation something is sure to come out of the Syndicalist Myth, as something came out of Early Christian Messianism; and something which is sure not to be like what is expected, for the very good reason that such expectation always leaves out of count everything that it does not happen to think of, which omitted factor (in the case of Messianism, the constitution of Antique Civilization and of human nature in general) is sure to assert its presence in a product which disappoints everybody.

In this sense it seems probable, nay, certain, that something will come of the Syndicalist Myth of the General Strike, with its programme of class warfare and violence; that the something will be different from the expected Armageddon and coming of the Proletarian Kingdom on Earth. And to this we may even add that, taking visible factors for progress into account, and particularly the growing capacity of classes and individuals to see and defend their own interests, it it possible, even probable, that the unknown something will be rather less intolerable than the known somethings of the present and the past.

But this is not M. Sorel's conception of the way that Myths—especially his own Syndicalist Myth—should

act. The new *régime* is not to be a compromise, a fusion of different interests, but a subordination of one kind of interest to another; or rather, it is to be an exclusion of all save one kind of interest. Does M. Sorel, therefore, partake in the belief that the Syndicalist Myth, the Myth whose efficacy is in its mythicalness, can ever be realized? Certainly not. It is not the coming of a *régime* of proletarian happiness which the Syndical myth is to compass: firstly, because that would mean realizing a myth, and M. Sorel tells us a Myth cannot be realized; secondly, because M. Sorel shows no inclination to accept a future of proletarian comfort, leisure, and culture when offered as the fruit of any cessation of class warfare, and this not because the offer of such a future appears to him a mere lying promise destined to prevent its own accomplishment. Moreover, and this is a significant point, the educative functions of the Syndicalist Myth are not conceived by him as conducive to such economic and administrative capacity as would be requisite before the proletarian could take over the functions of capitalism while continuing those of labour. For M. Sorel makes a distinct proviso that *the beneficial effects of class warfare can be compassed only if economic progress be not jeopardized*; a proviso referring, doubtless, to the levelling down of production in Trade Unions, the protection of idle and improvident members lest they should become blacklegs, and to the systematic

waste of time and damaging of plant at present preached and practised in Syndicalist *milieus* under the official name of *sabotage*.

"*It remains to be seen*," writes M. Sorel, "*s'il y a, dans le monde des producteurs, des forces d'enthousiasme capables de se combiner* avec la morale du bon travail, en sorte que, dans nos jours de crise, celle-ci puisse acquérir toute l'autorité qui lui est nécessaire pour conduire le monde dans la voie du progrès économique. . . ." (underlining mine).

This may seem to many of us a very big *if;* and a slovenly reader, or one who had not penetrated sufficiently into the Syndicalist Myth, might imagine that it is to this that M. Sorel is alluding when he warns us prophetically against "Le danger qui menace l'avenir du monde."

But that "*danger*," he goes on to state, "*peut être écarté si le prolétariat s'attache avec obstination aux idées révolutionnaires*," and as such exclusive attachment to revolutionary ideas is not diminishing but increasing the probabilty of economic barbarism and diminished social productiveness, we have seen that M. Sorel thinks that such economic decadence may possibly jeopardize the full benefits of the Syndicalist myth. We must, therefore, seek elsewhere for that "*danger which threatens the future of the world, and which can be avoided if the working class adheres obstinately to revolutionary ideas.*"

XIII

And that danger, alluded to time after time in the whole course of the book, is called by its name on the very last page of the "Réflexions sur la Violence."

"*J'ai établi . . . que . . . dans la ruine totale des institutions et des mœurs, il reste quelque chose de puissant, de neuf et d'intact, c'est ce qui constitue, à proprement parler, l'âme du prolétariat révolutionnaire: et cela ne sera pas entraîné dans la déchéance générale des valeurs morales, si les travailleurs ont assez d'énergie pour barrer le chemin aux corrupteurs bourgeois, en répondant à leurs avances par la brutalité la plus intelligible.*"

The *total ruin of institutions and morals.* A very dangerous business that would be! And it is, indeed, difficult to imagine how the world would get on without institutions or morals; so difficult, indeed, that some people feel sure (and myself among them) that the future can be trusted to make itself an ever new and adequate supply of things so indispensable to its safety. But M. Sorel, like many even of his most Anarchical countrymen, has no such comfortable though mean-spirited utilitarian view of ethics; for him, institutions and morals are not a means, but an end, a by-product of human life which human life will neglect and starve, like some beautiful and useless flower, unless *en-*

thousiasme waters it by sacrificing some of its poor little ration of happiness; nay, I suspect that in M. Sorel's thought, morality can flourish only on sacrifice, on tears perhaps, and possibly on blood.

For remark, that if the *valeurs morales* have no chance save from the enthusiasm and self-sacrifice begotten by the Syndicalist myth, that Syndicalist myth cannot itself be kept up with its class warfare and militant virtues, except by the application of such "violence" (however platonic) as will exasperate the selfish ruthlessness of the *bourgeoisie*, and make, or keep, it just as wicked and vile as you may want it.

Did not the enthusiasm and the "vigorous and intact" moral values of Primitive Christianity require, according to M. Sorel, a soil rich in the vices of decaying Antiquity, that fertile compost of abominations of which St Paul has left us a detailed analysis?

And there comes to my mind a sentence in the book of another moralist relying upon the efficacy (the "so-far-forth" truth) of myths.

"*Not the Absence of Vice*" writes Professor William James[1] "*but Vice there, and Virtue holding it by the throat, seems the ideal human state.*"

[1] In the volume of essays entitled, "The Will to Believe."

XIV

" *Et si le monde contemporain,*" writes M. Sorel (p. 220), " *ne renferme pas des racines pour une nouvelle morale, que deviendra-t-il ? . . . Peu de temps avant sa mort, Renan était fort préoccupé, etc. . . .* "

Here we are back at our starting-point, namely, the kinship of this preacher of class warfare with the great free-thinking obscurantist who wrote (and in two different places, as already remarked) that we are living off the shadow of a shadow, and wondered what unsubstantial moral pabulum mankind would provide for the morrow.

A few pages further (p. 250) M. Sorel again quotes Renan, as follows :—

" *Le soldat de Napoléon savait bien qu'il serait toujours un pauvre homme ; mais il sentait que l'épopée à laquelle il travaillait serait éternelle, qu'il vivrait dans le gloire de la France. . . . A défaut de paradis il y a la gloire qui est une espèce d'immortalité.*"

This curious quotation, where *La Gloire* takes the place of religious rewards, has connected itself in my mind with a certain newspaper interview (*La Voce*, December, 1909), in which M. Sorel refers to a Latin, what he calls (from Corneille) *a Cornelian* conception of virtue ; for, taken together, they afford a suggestion of—how shall I express myself ?—well,

of the texture of the shadows on whose shadows we are supposed to be living.

The *myth*—for that is the original shadow—is, as M. Sorel shows it us, an obscure fusion of concepts and emotions, and its function consists in calling forth in the individual a definitely directed—indeed, most often a monoideistic—enthusiasm, which enhances his energy and endurance far beyond his normal personal level, and keeps up this exaltation by the contagion of a similar state in his companions. Now such an exaltation of individual moral energy, and such directing it into a single common channel, is what we find connected in Classical Antiquity, or rather in Classical Antiquity as interpreted by Renaissance Italy and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France, with the particular thing called *glory*—not the glory of God, but the glory (which we Anglo-Saxons sometimes paraphrase as *vaingloriousness*) of Man.

> " *Romains, j'aime la gloire et ne veux point m'en taire :*
> *Des travaux des humains c'est le digne salaire ;*
> *Qui n'ose la vouloir, n'ose la mériter* "—

(That is Voltaire, doing the Corneille, and not so badly either.)

And it is with such *glory* that, as is shown by the quotation from Renan by Sorel, both these myth-mongers have explicitly connected that *Ombre* without which we can none of us live.

"À défaut de Paradis il y a la gloire," says M. Renan, "qui est une espèce d'immortalité."

The virtue-producing myth can therefore be understood by thinking, not merely of religious "revivals," but also of the Napoleonic, or other similar military *épopées*, whose glory, as we are told, will be eternal.

Now virtue of this sort does not merely depend for its production (so the myth-mongers tell us) on a delusion. This extra, this "marginal increment" as economists would word it, of virtue, may itself be something delusory, inasmuch as it does not answer to the permanent energies and organized habits of the individuals and the crowds from which it has been obtained.

Hence, even as each soul-exalting myth sooner or later discredits itself by insolvency, and requires replacing by some new myth of still untested credit, so also does the individual or collective soul turn out unable to keep up an output of heroism surpassing its real resources. This explains the distressing manner in which great myth-bred movements have either died out ingloriously or been succeeded by the more or less cynical turning to profit of the dogmas and rituals they had created. Think of the moral bankruptcy of the various Christian revivals, with their sects and monastic orders arising in successive reformations; think of the moral bankruptcy of the humanitarian

myth of 1789, even before the Directory and the Consulate. Nay, at this very moment stalwart French Liberals, believers in M. Sorel like MM. Péguy and Daniel Halévy, are lamenting the degeneration of the splendid Dreyfusard movement into political intrigue and anti-clerical jobbery.[1]

And, in the face of such a phenomenon of national delusion as Italy (December 1911) at present offers, I am led to wonder whether the political and administrative, the civic *marasma* which has grieved and disappointed every well-informed friend of Italy ("Italy is not yet a nation" wrote Giovanni Cena, alluding to the incapacity shown after the various Earthquakes) may not be attributable in part to the myth-bred enthusiasm which was employed, if not required, to obtain her independence as a nation.

Myths and the moral fillip they produce are apparently among the automatic means by which mankind, historically considered, shoves along on its path. But are they not wasteful, perhaps mischievous means? And should we not ask ourselves whether they are not, on the whole, vast, even if inevitable blunders, and ask ourselves also whether we are not blundering (and blundering from intellectual wantonness, not from

[1] Halévy, "Apologie pour notre Passé; Péguy, "Notre Jeunesse," both in "Cahiers de la Quinzaine," 1910-11. *Cf.* also the lamentable picture of French political life in the latter volumes of Rolland's "Jean Christophe."

ignorance) in the latter-day admiration for them exemplified by M. Sorel and his followers ?

XV

What is the balance, the *cash-value* of a myth ? What are the real *fruits for life* of that exaltation, religious, military, revolutionary—which, as our myth-mongers remind us, raises men above their ordinary selves ?

I have no wish to sit among the *re-valuers of values*, merely denying because others have affirmed. I merely wish to try and think out for myself, and ask others to study what may be the complicated, contradictory, perhaps inextricable truth about this matter. I have just put the case against the myth, pointing out the dangers of this alleged lifting of individuals and masses above their natural moral level. Let me put the case in its favour, so far as I myself can admit it.

It seems undeniable that most of us are often, indeed nearly always, putting out less moral and intellectual powers than we really have, because these powers are clogged by habit or run to waste in wrong channels. Our spiritual health, let alone growth, can benefit by the breaking up of routines, the opening of new directions, by the occasional occurrence of some sort of

crisis: it is not only religious persons who need to be *twice-*, indeed, *thrice-born.* The drums and cymbals of Myths call forth our dormant energies; the mythic expectation supplies a nucleus round which new habits can organize. In so far Myths are accomplishing a vital function for the race. But there are other factors of such necessary disruption and reorganization. There are natural renovations, re-births of the soul, besides these artificial, or at least accidental ones. Love, for instance, and in every one of its meanings, from the bodily stirring of sex and parenthood, to the passionate preference for certain kinds of work or surroundings—love in each of its various avatars elicits the latent forces and brushes away the effete habits of the soul. And does not every kind of strong joy do the same, and many kinds of grief? Life is, or might be, full of its own replenishings. And I am by no means sure that if it is not, this is not due in part to the clogging presence of old myths. For in speaking of myths and their functions, we ought surely to remember that a myth is not always spontaneous and new-born: it is, in most cases, quite incalculably old and most artificially preserved. Indeed, while M. Sorel ascribes all morality to the coming of new myths, Mr Crawley—who stands in this for a far larger number of thinkers—has ascribed all morality to the survival of old ones.

XVI

"Les personnes religieuses vivent d'une ombre. Nous vivons de l'ombre d'une ombre. De quoi vivra-t-on après nous ?"

Evidently, if any one continues living after us, it will be on something. And if people have lived for thousands of years on a shadow, and are now living on that shadow's shadow, it seems likely that being thus happily accommodating about spiritual nourishment, mankind will go on finding or making itself a mythical pabulum, or learn to live without such aliments at all, who knows. After this long dieting on illusions and traditions of illusions, it may, in some odd unexpected manner, accustom its spiritual digestion to the strong, but not very palatable food of reality.

But, after much turning it over, I am beginning to suspect that all this question *of what will replace present and past myths*, is but an idle one. It is due, I believe, to the dilettantishness of our philosophic thinkers, and even more to us philosophers attempting to appropriate, to secularize for our own benefit, the booths and signboards, the inventories and ledgers of former, or still existing, priesthoods. Those priests we are trying to replace (even when we officially keep them), earned their livelihood and kept up their dignity by dealing in mysteries, dispensing consolations and purifications, trafficking in amulets and philtres, explaining dreams,

and generally foretelling the future. Have we not peradventure, taken over their business, and fed ourselves, if not our readers, off the manufacture of figments ?

Surely it were well if we pondered over this possibility when we see Tolstoi protesting that without his particular spiritual formula the life of man is no better than that of cattle, or no life at all ; when we see poòr wavering, self-assertive Nietzsche labouring at successive fashion plates, patterns of Supermen, in order that the centuries to come may know once for all " how to make themselves noble " (sich veredlen) ! Nay, even that nice, wise, kind, sceptical old Renan, full of amiable, priestly optimism, asking, with one foot in the grave, what delusions unregistered in his pharmacopeia will serve as invalid's food for the coming generations ! And now, here is M. Sorel, Renan's syndicalist disciple, promising an adequate supply of quite fresh morality, an abundant output of heroism and *sublime*, by the simple device of an artificially fostered myth of General Strike and General Class Warfare.

Thinking over these examples (and sundry others not mentioned in this volume), I feel myself growing suspicious of these stolen Church properties. And the suspicion increases when, returning to M. Sorel's volume, I re-read the passage from Renan immediately preceding the famous " *de quoi vivra-t-on après nous ?* "

"*Les valeurs morales baissent*" (it is Renan writing, and Sorel quoting, but myself underlining), "*cela est sûr;* le sacrifice disparaît presque; *ou voit venir le jour où* l'égoîsme organise remplacera l'amour et la d'évouement."

I have underlined those two sentences, not merely because their self-confidence amazes me, but because their meaning is important in proportion to its obscurity.

Does Renan mean that, for lack of the necessary self-sacrifice, mankind will rot away and perish? If so, the thing to be grieved at is the terrible result of such diminished *dévouement* and self-sacrifice, not the lack of these virtues which has so produced it: after a railway accident it is not over the wrong signalling or the jerry built bridge that we lament, but over the resulting deaths and mutilations; if trains and passengers had been just as safe with no signalling at all, or across bridges of lath and plaster, there would be no cause for lamentation.[1]

But this is not Renan's meaning. Like many

[1] *Cf.* Prezzolini, "Teoria Sindacalista," p. 122.

"*Alla lotta di classe intesa come conquista politica e come miglioramento continuo non danno i sindacalisti alcuna importanza: essi la considerano invece sotto l'aspetto etico, e pensano piuttosto alle nuove virtù che crea che ai maggiori salari che permette e promette.*" The press campaign in favour of the Tripolitan War has presented an amusing interweaving of promises of lands flowing with milk and honey with just such "disinterested" readiness to pay half a million (let alone killed and wounded) for the acquisition of Latin virtues.

moralists and all religious persons, he has cultivated (at least, in others), virtue, purity, altruism, heroism, sublimity, so strenuously for their own sake, that he forgets that their cultivation was originally determined by their usefulness; and he is shocked at the bare thought of a world sufficiently decent to require rather less of them. For moralists and religious persons have striven, or at least talked, so long to establish, let us say, strict marriage ties for the greater safety and happiness of mankind that they would willingly sacrifice any human decency and happiness which could dispense with such conjugal indissolubility.

And similarly with patriotism, it has cost mankind a deal of moral effort to establish it; and moralists cannot admit that the time may come when it will be superseded, like horsemills and handlooms.

That Renan is just such a moralist (a gardener bent on prize vegetables rather than on feeding the hungry) is revealed by his horror at organized selfishness ever replacing the virtues. But would organizable selfishness not be the very perfection of conceivable virtue, if virtue is that which conduces to the world's happiness and progress in prosperity?

This, of course, is not at all Renan's conception. "*Si ce globe vient à manquer à ses devoirs*"—he writes with gloomy optimism—"*il s'én trouvera d'autres pour pousser à outrance le programme de toute vie. . . .*"

You imagine, perhaps, that Renan means herewith that if this globe were to perish from sheer lack of dutifulness, another globe, cultivating those neglected and necessary spiritual qualities, will take its place with a new lease of life? Nothing so crass! The sentence closes with a definition of life's proper program. Listen: "*Pour pousser à outrance le programme de tout vie: lumière, raison, vérité.*"

So if this poor old world of ours achieved life and happiness without compassing that threefold reiteration, that tautological trinity of Lumière, Raison, Vérité, another world would have to take its place, a world with sounder views about *devoirs*. Now when a man like Renan speaks of *devoirs*, of *what is due*, we may well ask *due, duty, to whom?* Due to mankind, coming and to come? But would mankind ask for Lumière, Raison, Vérité, or be wise in asking, before more humble desiderata were forthcoming? Surely there would be neither light nor reason in such a choice, and mankind would never make it. Hence that devoir is not *to* mankind. It is, in fact quite evidently, *from* or *of* mankind. And asking once more *towards whom*, we are met by a mere impersonal vagueness called *Dieu*, or perhaps some new fangled similar abstraction, but behind which lurks what Nietzsche (alone, I fancy, among philosophers) had the clear-sighted outspokenness to call "My taste—*mein Geschmack.*" In other words, there would, in this case be found hidden the

habits of mind, the standards, nay, the professional and professorial preferences.

There was, indeed, in Renan another element, of straightforward sympathy, of honest, shamefaced, sceptical good sense, making him insinuate ever and again, indeed at times proclaim, that Caliban was a safer monster, when all is said and done, than sublime Prospero; that the craving for ease, peace and pleasure, all poor vulgar mankind's pathetic recoil from pain and passionate grasping at happiness, might after all, and more than any taste for "Lumière" and "Dévouement" be the force which drives the spiritual world. Who knows? the force through which alone the love of Lumière and D'évouement, the very existence of any spirituality at all, could ever have arisen, and can ever take significance.

It is probably for such moments for sceptical and lowly insight that M. Renan has been denounced as nihilistic and dilettantish by some of his fellow-obscurantists, among whom especially Prof. William James. But it seems to me that if there was in Renan any moral dilettantism, it was precisely of the same sort as Professor James' own disgust at the mawkishness of an unheroic world.

Such preachers of morality for morality's own sake (as other dilettantes preach art for art's own), like to contemplate heroes, martyrs, sages, supermen living off *ombres* and *ombres d'une ombre* as grosser persons like

to look at prize milch cows or at the forced and seedless plants at a flower show. And Renan is only the most subtle and charming, precisely because the most sceptical and self-contradictory, representative of that priestly mind which takes for granted that God, God more, or perhaps less, Almighty—must have the same tasks as himself, and therefore have intended the Universe for this taste's (a taste refined, *délicat, a taste in good taste!*), especial cultivation and delectation.

XVII

And naturally, for, as already remarked, it is the especial vocation and business of men like these to select and enrich the world's necessary growth of virtues. Indeed—and now we may return from the Master to the disciple, from Renan to M. Sorel—it seems just possible that the philosophical importance of the *Myth* should be sought in its being not a cause, but an effect. The myths with which each individual among us consoles and urges on his spirit—myths of personal ambition, activity, of loving and especially being loved—are, after all, undeniable symptoms of our deep down needs; and needs, when they do not run to waste in just such myths, are the particles of energy, whose summed up minuteness moves, rends, and reshapes the world. And similarly one may ask

whether the Christian myth and the myth of 1789 have not been operative merely inasmuch as—well, as not they, but the needs and powers they stood for, were genuine realities. Is not this why M. Sorel's syndicalist myth of the General Strike may truly represent some as yet indescribable change and improvement in the condition of the Proletariat? In fact, one might profitably ask oneself whether, in the *Will-to-Believe*, the passive deciduous element is not the Belief, and the active, the creative, because real one, the Will which begets fiction so long as it cannot yet engender reality?

XVIII

And to return (now for the last time), to M. Sorel and his theory of myths. The interesting, original (and also amusing) peculiarity about him is that he values the Will to Believe just because it does not lead to reality. Let us sum up his argument one last time. Look round the world. No sooner are we face to face with reality, no sooner do we know the true details of things and their actual workings, but we have to recognise that there is only perfunctoriness, fraud, and corruption. Hence you can get no great enthusiastic mass-movements, no sustained heroism and saintliness out of any realisable projects. But myths have neither details nor consequences, hence no drawbacks, and the

more you pursue, the further they draw you on. Reality is succeeded by reality, each unsatisfactory, and each demolished in turn. But the myth eludes all assaults, and soars undiminished and undefeated. Hence the world's greatest revolutions: Primitive Christianity, the Reformation and 1789, have been brought about by belief in a myth. And the next great revolution will be brought about by the Syndicalist myth of the General Strike.

Yes; but the Apostles did not preach that the Coming of the Kingdom of Heaven was a myth pregnant of other consequences. Neither did the first Protestants go to the stake to uphold what they knew to be a mere myth leading to the scission of the Teuton and Latin worlds and the arrival of David Strauss and the Higher Criticism. Still less did the men of the Revolution go (and send their neighbour) to death in hopes of the establishment of a French Bourgeois Monarchy or a Combes-Briand Republic. And one wonders whether those syndicalists who read M. Sorel's "Réflexions sur la Violence" will be quite as ready to spend their wages in preparing and keeping up strikes once they have grasped that it is the essence of the General Strike never to come off, and the function of the Syndicalist myth merely to replenish the world's supply of early Christian or Cornelian-antique virtues?

XIX

These *Vital Lies*, new-fangled or old-established, thus pressed upon us by philosophers, are of the nature of those royal roads of which we are told there can be none in geometry.

Nor in Truth of any kind. For royal roads are those along which, our wishes magically turned into horses, we beggars are wont to ride.

Viewed in this way they become more or less sympathetic. For they most often represent, they and all their cognate utopias and panaceas, the expression, the passionate desire of some man or men to compass, single-handed (and often single-witted), the reformation or the preservation of the moral and sometimes of the social world. When a man is generous enough to fix his imagination upon some of the vast stupid atrocities of human life as it exists, the horror that such things should be, easily turns into disbelief of their being even temporarily inevitable. The violently stirred human nature of the looker-on enlarges, envelopes, obscures everything, and becomes for him nature herself; his violated feelings, the mere sample of nature's outraged intentions, as when Tolstoi tells us that what he felt on witnessing a guillotining made him understand beyond all power of argument that the infliction of death on human beings must be wrong; whereas the

right and wrong of that, as of other action, can be decided only by comparing the possible horrors avoided with the evident horror committed. All of us who have ever been decently young must recollect similar episodes, where the overwhelming of our own feelings has brought with it the conviction that *there must be some way out of it*, and bid us burst our hearts and brains till that way was found. Now a way out of many, perhaps most, abominations there very probably is: the gradual, steady impinging of fact on fact, of interest on interest, and will on will, which infinitely slowly, but inevitably rolls away the various loads of human horror. And optimism consists in recognizing that, however, infinitesimal the share of ourself and our day, we can each of us contribute our microscopic will towards the purpose; indeed that the less each one of us can singly do, the more need that each should singly do it. But that is a recognition which comes (sometimes, alas, only with our own diminished vitality), when we notice that there is not one evil only to combat, but a hundred, and that concentration on one may neglect and even increase the others. Now the minds seeking for royal roads see only one direction in which to go; only one goal; and they become willing to sacrifice all other goals and directions, nay, they become jealous, suspicious of every other aim and every other effort. For there is furious envy and hatred in such reformers; they almost prefer Evil to other proposed Good, or other means of

attaining good; see M. Sorel's rage with parliamentary socialism, with bourgeois humanitarians, with anything that tends to social reorganization, otherwise than in his own way. And (this time tragic instead of humorous) think of Tolstoi's destructive hatred (of him whose recipe was *loving !*) of liberalism, socialism, science, in fact all those means towards his end which seemed an interference and a criticism of his own panacea. Such seekers after royal roads would make the world a wilderness, and like religious fanatics, choke hell with victims to keep their private paradise select.

Perhaps, being so opposed to the multiplicity and complexity of reality, such minds are not really dangerous, and representing after all one, however warped, moral force, they may be useful. But they are, if we look at them calmly, not (as I said) entirely sympathetic, and rather figures for farce or tragedy—(Tolstoi, the King Lear of morality !)—good for our intellectual entertainment and moral *catharsis*, or shaking up by pity and terror, rather than genuine benefactors of mankind.

So it seems to me.

But then, I am the sort of person who believes that fallacies and myths, and even the noblest self-delusions, always leave a heavy debt to pay.

PART III

EPILOGUE

THE AUTHOR SOLILOQUIZES

THESE studies of what I have called *Vital Lies*, have been useful to myself by making me think as clearly as I was able on the points where my Will-to-believe Obscurantists had thought obscurely and ambiguously.

But their chief value in my own eyes is in the trains of thought which have accompanied my readings in Pragmatism, theoretical and applied; trains of thought converging towards a rough philosophy of my own, or at least showing me the gap which some philosophy, at once natural and practical, must some day fill up.

The following notes embody some of these trains of thought; after discussing so long with others, I owe these the chance, and myself the satisfaction, of talking about Truths and Lies, Vital or otherwise, on my own account.

CHAPTER I

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I

True in so far as Misunderstood

But, as the heading of this page will show you, there are kinds of truth not usually mentioned in polite society, like other offspring of passion, "natural" but not "legitimate." Thus Mr Crawley, we have seen, is anxious that the machinations of socialists should be circumvented by continued teaching of the Church of England catechism, without any footnotes about "Elemental ideas," identifications of religions and sexual instincts, and the use of the Bull Roarer.

And even the dignified candour of Father Tyrrell

seems to claim only that he and his learned fellow-Modernists be allowed to believe whatever they do, while the rest of Christendom is apparently to continue believing . . . well, whatever it is told. As regards the Myth of the General Strike, it would be interesting to know the theory, and also the practice, of some Syndicalist leader after study of the "Réflexons sur la Violence." Would he feel himself justified in preaching Class Warfare to workmen who had not studied M. Sorel, or not profited by their study?

In short, would all these high-and-wide-minded persons continue using words with unequivalent equivalences of meaning, employing phrases which subserve their purpose just in so far as they are misunderstood?

[*In so far forth true!* here is another application for Professor James' definition.]

No two human beings, answer our obscurantists, can ever mean quite the same thing. Psychology teaches us that. Very possibly; but is the result of this teaching to be that those who have been taught it shall go on letting those who have not learned this psychological fact believe that in their case, at least, human beings not only *can* mean just the same thing, but actually DO mean it?

Briefly, is our increasing discrimination of meaning to lead to greater accuracy and sincerity, or to greater slovenliness and double dealing?

Do you remember Faust's theological discussion with

Gretchen on the garden bench? He was bent upon vulgar seduction, and had already sold his soul to the devil when he assured the poor little girl that he and she had, *au fond*, the same religious views. Yet even Faust being but an eighteenth century freethinker, did make some difficulties about that word "God," and left himself open to the suspicion that he was no proper Christian.

Our latter day sages, abundantly conscious of the high purity of their intentions, are less explicit. They do not stickle at current nomenclature, but calmly found their reconstruction of society or morals on whatever convenient lumps of misapprehension may be furnished ready to their hand by the World Spirit, or by Macrocosmus in person.

II

Truths and their Precedence

We are so desperately persuaded of the supreme value of Truth that we have ended by thinking (or ruminatingly taking for granted) that only Truth can have value, and therefore everything which is valuable must be true.

Hence a complicated hierarchy of truths, complicated like the rules of precedence for marshalling peers and peers' sons and foreign ambassadors into dinner. For

instance, there is Moral Truth, which is—Oh, so high! Religious truth making it, nevertheless, take a back seat. There is Artistic truth, of which some persons suspect that, being so singularly cavalier with things as they seem to the inartistic eye, it must be of altogether superior rank, or else a lunatic or malefactor.

There is also Truth, which we not only know, but *feel*, that is to say, *like*, and its double appeal must be doubly true. In short, among all these various kinds of degrees of truth, there seems to be only one which all thinkers are agreed to put into a simple and lowly place—the Truth which, being neither Moral, nor Artistic, nor Religious, neither higher nor double, does not appeal to any of our likings, but merely deals with what things insist on being.

III

Why Vital Lies are called Vital Truths

And by one of those paradoxes wherein this subject naturally abounds, there is one particular Vital Lie which is oldest, most immortal of all, perpetually reproduced under the stimulus of human desire. That archetype of Vital Lies is the one identifying all ideas, notions, opinions found comfortable or beneficial by man, with Truth.

For Truth is a thing we all require to get from our

neighbours; and it is, at the same time, a thing our neighbours by no means always require to give to us, so *we*, by which I mean that vague abstraction of change and habit called mankind, have surrounded the giving of truth, and finally truth itself, with a halo of virtue. Hence also, wanting it from others, we grow to think of it as good to give to ourselves, and by a further slipshod transition, to think that what it is profitable for us to give ourselves, is *true*. So we get Keats' "Beauty is truth, truth Beauty," and the more French and normative "Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai seul est aimable" of elegant Boileau; moreover, the Pragmatists' less poetical definitions, "What it would be better for us to think," etc., which are but the paradoxical summings up of much religious habit, exemplified in Tolstoi's naïf clamour that Science *should teach us to be good;* exemplified also in the theological identification of God with truth, of anything the Church finds opportune to teach with the *only* Truth, and the consequent damnation of such persons as obstinately refuse to see the Truth.

All this is due to the value of truth-telling in social relations, let alone that of knowing how things truly are in all our practical dealings. But as a matter of fact the inner life of man, as distinguished from his life among material objects and his fellow men, requires a constant supply of what is often not truth at all, indeed occasionally takes its value from being false. For the

endurable cohabitation of the individual soul with its own self requires food for self-esteem as much as the health of the body requires material sustenance. Hope also is wanted, and a degree of confidence in men and things. Many men have, however, lived without much of either, and even lived, glorious misanthropes and pessimists, very comfortably indeed. But no man has lived comfortably without some amount of belief in his own importance; and the deadly devitilization of the moments and days when we have starved for lack of similar moral sustenance proves that no entire life can ever do without it. Such is the faith without which life is worthless! And all religions and religious persons have distorted the need for such faith in oneself into need for faith in something else. For what, I wonder, is faith in the loving kindness of God, His pleasure in our love, except the assurance that *we* are either worthy of love, or, in the case of abjectest self-abasement, that *we* are invested with extrinsic value by such undeserved concern for us? The spiritless wretch of Browning's *Instans Tyrannus*, is secure just in proportion as he has no power or wish to defend himself.

> "*Did I say 'without friend?'*
> *Say rather, from marge to blue marge*
> *The whole sky grew his targe,*
> *With the sun's self for visible boss,*
> *While an arm ran across*
> *Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast*
> *Where the wretch was safe prest.*

Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed,
So, I *was afraid.*"

Just imagine the satisfactoriness of such a view of man's relations with the Divinity! Why, the Tyrant himself is quite delighted to tell us the anecdote.

Now such faith in our (however humble) importance, may, of course, be founded upon reality. It may be the outcome of realities, of the mere obscure organic strugglings of bodily existence which we do not recognize for what they are, mankind mistaking for moral or intellectual importance, the mere insistence of vegetative growth or animal locomotion and animal appetites. But the existence of this faith in our importance, although warranted by such organic realities (whether apparent or hidden), does not depend on them; it depends on a need which, reality or no reality warranting, produces it simply because it is needed. Such is the chief, the primæval *Vital Lie*. It may be coincident with the vital truth, but it is independent of it. Indeed its main biological function is that of a weapon, an armour, a waterproof, against such truths as happen not to be vital or vitalizing.

And this faith in one's own importance (and what can assert its reality more tyrannously than our own individual existence?) may be eked out, given an objective excuse, by our faith in someone else, to whom we attribute the importance we lack ourselves: the

Divinity, for instance, in the theological optimism of *Instans Tyrannus*. Oftener still—for we all possess secondary religions, Lares and Penates, more cherished than the great gods—we obtain the needful faith by belief in the importance of something—family, tribe, nation, creed, regiment, or club—of which our small unworthiness is a part. And in each case the belief in this *other being* or *other thing*, is produced either by exploitation of a truth, or, if more convenient, by the mere employment of falsehood. For in this case—and perhaps in every case—we take truth into account only to the extent to which it may help out or jeopardize the tissue of beliefs we happen to need, or at least to want, whether true or not. Whenever, as often happens, we detect this process in some of our neighbours, we laugh, or, more humanely, smile. But among all the foolish and wicked gods and goblins devised in our own image there seems to be one lacking; the divinity who beams benignantly on the uses to which we put our Olympus.

IV

Belief which is Doubt

Intimately connected with Truth-which-is-what-it would-be-better-for-us-to-believe is another Pragmatistic identification, which, for brevity's sake, I must

allow myself to designate as Belief-which-is Doubt. Of this, though not summed up under so paradoxical a heading, Professor James is fond of telling us that it requires courage, shows a love of adventure, and to use his own words, appeals to a generous power of risking a little beyond the literal evidence.

"*Faith means*," he writes ("Will to Believe," p. 90), "*belief in something concerning which doubt is still theoretically possible, and as the test of belief is the willingness to act, one may say that faith is the readiness to act in a cause the prosperous issue of which is not certified to us in advance. It is, in fact, the same moral quality which we call courage in practical affairs. And there is a very widespread tendency in men of vigorous nature.*"

Well, in this sentence, as in so many similar ones, there is the not-unpragmatistic equivocation and ambiguity-mongering in the use of that word *Faith*.

One of the meanings of Faith, of course, implies the willingness to assume the attitude of belief when belief is not really forthcoming. A person says: "Will you have *faith* in me?" meaning, "Will you *trust* me? Will you risk giving your time, your money, your trouble, your affections, as if you were certain that in thus giving them to me they were safe." In this sense Faith is a substitute for Belief, as credit is a substitute for wealth. But the fact

of the substitution shows that the two things are separate.

On the other hand we may say: "I have faith in his word," meaning, "I actually believe him incapable of telling me a lie." In this second sense, *Faith* is identical with Belief. And it is in this second sense that people have faith in religion, on the occasions (which are indeed rare among our latter day obscurantists), when they *have* got religious faith. Now in this latter case there is *no risk run*, and there is no courage about the business. On the other hand, when there is conscious risk, and in proportion as this risk is known to be risky, there is boldness, but there is also lack of belief, or more precisely, what belief there is about something else; for in this risky kind of faith the belief consists not in thinking that the friend cannot tell lies, the bank cannot be insolvent, or Heaven and Hell turn out figments, but in thinking that such things may be but that contrariwise they may also not be, and [a different added belief] that taken all round, for some reason of fitness to our temper, of saving of time and securing of opportunity, or as in Pascal's famous wager, a reason of comparison between possible gains and losses —which reason, whatever it is, is believed in quite *bona fide*—one of the two possible alternatives is better to face than the other. Such a choice between alternatives may imply courage if the odds are great, or imply prudence if the odds are small, and whether great or

small, it implies the taking of a risk. But this taking of a risk can exist only if there is not belief in there being no alternative. In other words *risk* implies doubt as to which of two or more possibilities will turn out true and force itself eventually on our belief, and it is this form of *doubt* which obscurantists, as here exemplified by Professor James, call *belief*. The conjuring trick is done as follows: Belief is shown to be, in several cases, as when we say "I have faith in his word" the same thing as Faith; Faith is shown to be, in several cases (which are precisely those where there can be no belief), the taking of a risk. Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, you see that Belief is the taking of a risk.

And all the time that Belief which is consciously taking a risk has a name of its own: it is *Doubt*.

V

The Benefit of the Doubt

Much of the discussion of Will-to-Believe arises, I am inclined to think, not merely from the slovenly use of the word *Belief*, but also from the fact that much which is nowadays called *religious belief* is not *Belief* at all. Indeed it might more correctly be termed *Doubt*, because it is an alternation, a "forse che is,

forse che no," of recognized possibilities, or at the utmost, of probabilities. There *may* be Heaven and Hell, a Personal Divinity, Christ *may* have been God, the Church *may* know more about it than other folk, the Pope *may* be infallible, the *may be* testifying to the presence in our mind of a *may not*. This is a condition of Doubt, and in the ages of *bona fide* belief, it was recognized as such, and as such experienced as a torture and fought against as a peril, although it now does duty as *Belief*. What turns such Doubt into the thing modern believers call Belief is either the consideration that it is safer to act as if one *did* believe, namely, go to Church, partake in the sacraments, avoid heretical discourse, etc., because doing so may prove a gain and cannot prove a loss. Or real Doubt may be turned into apparent belief for another reason and by another process, namely, the comfortableness of a point of view, the pleasantness of a certain thought habitually indulged, as I may reiterate to myself the thought that "God's sun's in the sky, all's right in the world," or, "il faut cultiver notre jardin," because one of these views is suitable and pleasant for my contemplation. But this kind of "Belief" is very different from the belief in something being *true*, for instance, the belief in fire burning in the abstract, or a concrete fire having burnt a concrete house. Now it was in this latter sense that Dante believed in Hell Fire in general, and the burning of his pet evil-doers in particular.

This modern shifting of the word "Belief" to designate a state of *Doubt*, has brought with it the misapplication also of the word *Disbelief*. In our latter day parlance a *Disbeliever* or *Unbeliever* means *one who denies;* and Religious doubts mean at the very least a beginning of denial, an alternation of denial and affirmation. With such a conception of Belief, it is easy to understand how Belief may be regarded as a matter of deliberate choice; and may even be credited with a power of influencing the realization of its object. For if you fix your mind upon the alternative, and entirely exclude the opposite, you may, in certain cases, increase by your steady push the chances of the chosen alternative. Only, if you are aware of this little operation on your own part, you are really believing not in that alternative being certain, but only in its being possible. In fact, you are in doubt as to what the future has in store, and you are giving yourself and your hoped for alternative the benefit of the doubt in that very act of "Belief."

VI

"Reason Unreasonable"

All this matter of Belief which is Doubt is due to one of those many imperfections of logical thought about

which Obscurantists are so constantly eloquent. Or, more strictly, it is due not to thought being over logical, but to thinkers being too slovenly to examine into what they are thinking about; the logical nexus is not to blame, but the logic being applied to words whose meaning is perpetually shifted.

For the great drawback of all thought, and more especially of thought's verbal expression, is that thought is necessarily always moving and shifting. We are, so to speak, always thinking of some other point or from some other point. And thought is also moving from different points. We are always thinking in comparisons, in exclusions and negations; we are always implicitly thinking in expectations: Syrup of Tamarind may be thought of as *sour*, or a room heated to 60° as *cold*, because we have started from an expectation that syrup means a predominance of sugar, and heated rooms mean such that we take off our outer garments. Given the starting point that willows are green, we may say that these particular willows, in this particular light, are pink, meaning thereby that there is a very small admixture of pink in their green, and that we distinguish their greenness from other greenness by this tiny amount of pinkness. We usually know what we are talking about. But it does happen occasionally that a painter fixes his attention upon the newly discovered (therefore interesting) pinkness, and consequently paints you willows which are pink in the sense of pink

roses. And what this impressionist used to do in my young days, we thinkers and we talkers are perpetually doing in our discussions, adding to our well-established, and, may I say, Socratic slovenliness, the new-fangled slovenliness of falling foul of thought because we do not happen to think correctly.

Moreover, we are perpetually and legitimately shuffling the present and the future, and (not legitimately, but very naturally) forgetting that we have thus shuffled. Forgetting that the present is turning into past and the future into present even while we think of them, so that when we remark, as is fashionable nowadays, that *belief can create its own object*, we forget that if the belief did the creating, why then, before that creating had been done the belief was not true, but false.

Similarly, and for most obvious reasons, we hasten to say that the human intellect is but a poor thing, because we have experienced in our person, and more frequently those of our opponents, that human beings are rather poor in intellect.

VII

Belief as Activity and Belief as Inertness

There may be dignity, and even a certain safety, in a delusion, if by delusion we mean such as are begotten by

the demands of our nature, for then they represent, in proportion to their strength, a portion of reality, that of a want, a manner of feeling, of living, a necessity and a force; they represent *oneself*.

But is it not different with the mere lazy imitation of other folks' and other times', often misunderstood, formulæ of experience or desire? For that is mere taking for granted. We take for granted everything that is, I will not say pleasant or profitable, but easy, what costs no effort to face. We take for granted that we ourselves are normal, that others are normal, that things are arranged to suit us, until we are bruised by the contrary. We continue, despite all bruisings, to think that we are likely to be in the right, and that what we dislike is likely to be wrong.

All this is largely negative, lack of activity and of organization, weakness, not strength. And from this arise the Lies which, far from being Vital, are necessarily killed off by the process of living, the Lies which try to stop the process of living, to clog it with their presence.

VIII

Socrates and the Tyrants

Half truths, confusions, transparent sophisms, can, when they suit the unconscious convenience of mankind,

turn into what M. Fouillée has taught us to call Idées-Forces. Thus, for instance, the sophism of Socrates, in the *Gorgias*, insisting and persisting (and by what a chain of argument!) that *virtue* and *happiness* are one and the same thing; and Tolstoi's newer (or in its Buddhistic essence far older) sophism identifying *Life* with the *Life of Mankind*, and the happiness of the individual with that of the race. Socrates was confusing one single desideratum with that possession of many desiderata, including freedom to do as we choose, which is one of the causes of happiness. Meanwhile, Callicles and the Tyrants happened not to consider virtue as the one thing necessary for their happiness, they preferred power, and went on being happy viciously in the teeth of Socrates. Similarly, in the teeth of Tolstoi, the happiness of nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand human beings (and perhaps Tolstoi's own, when he was not thinking about such questions), has consisted and consists in dozens of things besides the sense of communion with God and of common life with mankind. Sophisms, both, *ombres d'une ombre*, as Renan would have said, and you might add, with the peculiarity so remarkable in shadows, of magnifying, but also distorting, even to caricature and monstrosity, the solid, small, decent reality behind them. Shadows, and grotesque ones, yet which, even as Renan expresses it, have been lived on by humankind—lived upon, however, in conjunction with the very substantial reality

they contradict. Or rather, perhaps, promissory notes, *assignats* like those current during the French Revolution, with very little cash behind them, yet forming a system of national credit, and enabling you to buy a penn'orth of bread in return for a promise of ten thousand francs.

The sophism of Socrates, and the sophism renewed by Tolstoi, have tended rather to their own realization than to the contrary, because the convenience of many individuals, co-operating unconsciously and selecting automatically, has chosen to give them credit. Mankind made it easier and easier to identify Socratic virtue with happiness, by giving those who had not got it an unpleasant reputation, and an uneasy conscience, which both disturbed what other happiness they had. Similarly social, or rather racial, advantage has also made it easier (or at least less difficult), to identify the bulk happiness of life with a constantly trained and ever growing sense of obedience to the will of God, until we have got men like Tolstoi and his kind, in whom happiness can be destroyed by lack of that sense of living in God's ways.

The usefulness of one-sided views, of sophisms like these of Socrates and Tolstoi, depends not on their being of mythical nature, but on the prosaic fact that mankind is perpetually transposing the objects of its desires, the ingredients of its happiness ; exchanging the emotions attached to various realities and ideas, or

rather attaching different kinds and degrees of emotion to the same things and the same ideas: substituting pleasure in the means for pleasure in the end, substituting pleasure in relief from pain for pleasure as such, and pleasure in power, in sympathy, in conformity, or in rebellion, for pleasure in the things which power, sympathy, conformity, or rebellion can obtain.

Commandments and ideals are among the automatic mechanism of such unceasing, unintentional transposition and transformation of desires and efforts. And by the associative virtue of mere words, the drum-or-church-bell-power of often repeated phrases, sophisms have acquired still more of the utility of promissory notes, lying statements if taken literally, but with a humble use of eking out credit among a race of beings still very lacking in the substantial wealth of knowledge and self-control.

IX

Mid-Victorian Ethics

Attempting (though the reader may scarcely believe it) to take a brief against myself and do justice to ideas similar to those of Mr Crawley, I have been reading over again some notes of conversations with a very typical English moralist of the Mid-Victorian School, a moralist who is (and 'tis the most genuine kind) merely

an intelligent old lady, having suffered much and helped much, and whose notions have stood the test of such suffering and helping. There is much to commend her views, if one may call views what consists very largely in blinking and even turning one's back on what there is to see. This straightlacedness has dignity, simplicity, practicality, a sort of manliness, by the side of which foreign and latter-day width of sleeve seems futile and also decidedly plebeian. Compared with their venerable British copy-book of beautiful caligraphical precepts and fair blank pages, the kind of literature typified (leaving contemporaries alone), by Rousseau's *Confessions* or Stendhal's novels, is foul and depressing reading. Among the headings in this living book of practical morals, constantly repeated and deserving of such honour, I find the principle that self-denial is the highest wisdom, and that the human soul is never the loser for any constraint or mutilation accomplished on itself; that a man, especially a woman, is the happier, or at least the more efficient, for every NO said to the self. Of course, in point of fact, this NO is limited in the main to would-be breaches of the Seventh Commandment, and we hear comparatively little of NO to ambition, pride, desire for wealth, and still less of NO to desire for domestic peace and apparent decorum; but the principle is tacitly supposed to have been applied to other evil possibilities. Or rather it is taken, for granted that other evil possibilities cannot intrude

into decent society, and that only decent society exists for decent contemplation.

As I listen, evening after evening, to anecdotes and judgments embodying these aristocratic views of the most aristocratic of all peoples, to wit, ourselves, I feel, as I said, that everything else, Ibsenian notions for instance, are oddly tentative, and oddly compounded of furtiveness and aggression; there is no foretelling them, no order about them, whereas this tory morality is order and nothing but order. It has a *divine right*, not to say a divine certainty about it. It is only little by little I begin to suspect its very human, even very much too human, origin. Its one-sidedness and hard-and-fastness reveal it to be one of the many illusions arising from hurry and hurried convenience. Despite all its airs of unselfishness, and even of self-immolation, it makes daily life easier, less responsible, lazier, for it makes judgment simpler and quicker at the expense of truth. Indeed, when I look at it closely, it is rough and ready, and ruthless, denying all appeal to the creature judged, allowing every degree of hurry and slovenliness to the judges: it savours of the court-martial. . . .

And this leads me to reflect (though I do not communicate my reflections to my venerable friend) that moral codes are, after all, not much finer than the economic methods which they accompany, and, like these, they are often sadly wasteful and productive of shoddy and refuse-heaps. But they are the short cut,

at the time they arise, to some absolute necessary of social life. They sacrifice a portion of truth, they blink some part of reality, and every such disregard of truth entails (however inevitable) a sacrifice of many individuals and their powers for good: the Magdalen, had she been duly stoned for her adulteries, would neither have brought her ointment for Christ's feet, nor watched, as we see her on the frescoes, by the side of the cross. And here comes another illusion due to life's roundabout practicality, the brutal need, the stupid barbarous hurry, which has produced such imperfect codes, manages also by unconscious adjustment to surround them with loyalty, love, and awe. And the more imperfect our ethics, the more they are safeguarded in our hearts and imaginations by the reluctance to question, the horror of disobeying.

X

Of Racial Instinct

Certain obscurantists (of the Crawley type) find a practical proof of the utility of superstitions, in the almost animal anxiety displayed in guarding religious and ethical premisses from enquiry and criticism. Bad as are the quarrels of men of science and of artists, these are confined to the interested specialists,

and the rest of mankind do not tear each other to pieces about Post-Impressionism or the transmission of acquired characteristics. It is only about religious and moral questions (patriotism in its various modern aberrations partaking of both) that we find, in the field of mere belief and opinion, such universal tigress-and-young fear and ferocity. The result, all this, jubilate our obscurantists, and the proof also, of a *Racial Instinct* defending these matters! Possibly; but in that case how does your *Racial Instinct* set to work? And ought it not to have resulted in the survival of fetichism and taboo, or at least the disappearance of the races who first got rid of such useful superstitions?

Instead of Racial Instinct, so plentifully invoked (like every word compounded of those great *Xs* Race and Races) nowadays, is it not possible that the persistence of superstitions and superstitious attitudes may be explained by a mere individual instinct of which daily life furnishes many examples: the instinct to avoid taking trouble? And is not such conservatism born of lazy convenience of ready-made rules and averages; of the hurried or wearied reluctance to verify one's compass; of the discomfort, sometimes the paralysing discomfort, of readjusting opinions and conduct; in fact, born of inertness such as makes the poor sluggard suffer agonies at being waked, and turn desperately on to the other ear?

Perhaps the obscurantists might answer that inertness, fatigue, sluggishness, are themselves Racial advantages and due to the great Racial Instinct. Shall we conclude that if people had been more alacritous and elastic, the human race would have ceased to have offspring, been gobbled up by Palæolithic monsters, or (what obscurantists might like even less), that its finer varieties, for instance the noble Aryan, would have philosophized themselves into non-resistance against the Negro, or even (what Gobineau did indeed allege against the ancestors of Plato and of Pheidias), into intermarriage with the Semite? This leads to the dilemma, either that the superior sub-race was not superior in intelligence and adaptive power, or, that too much superiority may be a bad thing; with the manifest corollary that a dash of the negro, a preponderance of the Semite, might have done the nobler Aryan races a world of good.

The proposition that *prejudices have been necessary for keeping up the standard or strain of superiority*, would thus require eking out by a counter proposition that *prejudices must be broken through to diminish that unpractical superiority*. And both propositions would require the supplement of a remarkably *terre à terre* statement, namely: *Prejudices are sometimes useful and are sometimes mischievous*. Or, put in more dignified language, superstition may be the result of Racial Instinct, but if that be the case, then another

result of Racial Instinct is the rebellious criticism of that selfsame superstition.

So perhaps it is wiser, let alone more modest, not to let Racial Instinct, that vast smoky genius, out of his allegorical bottle. The persons, however, who insist upon having dealings with Racial Instinct, do not regard that huge personification as at all able to take care of himself, at least not nowadays. In any case they—these philosophers both of the Crawley and the Sorel type—seem always ready to lend him a hand in keeping up old superstitions or fabricating new ones.

XI

Of Private Cults

De quoi vivra-t-on après nous?

All this latter-day talk of the educative power of religious and patriotic, and now, of socialistic delusions, this everlasting fear that the human soul may starve for lack of vital lies. . . .

But are we not many, most, perhaps all of us, brought up (those educable at all) by delusions of a less public kind, myths uncatalogued of historians and sociologists? educated by phantom teachers, friends, parents, lovers, made up by our own creative needs out of a few, often misunderstood, indications? Nay, I incline

to think that these hidden episodes of the inner life (when we have eyes to see them) may teach us by analogy wherein lies the true power of other beneficent delusions: in the fact of their being *ours*. The parent whose word is law, the friend we blush to disappoint, and the Godhead to whom we dedicate our efforts and sacrifices, are, after all, consubstantial with those very feelings of ours which we attach to their names; they are the patterns made for ourselves out of the moral substance which we try, for days or years, or for a lifetime, to fashion in their image. It is surely a curious proof of our unwillingness to recognize these fruitful self-deceptions that the novel, so far as I know, has hitherto not dealt with this large side of life and life's romance and tragedy, namely, our education by parents, and lovers, and friends, who have never really existed save in our own loving imagination.

XII

The Right to Delude

On the undeniable fact that half of our beliefs result from mere personal or collective passion, habit, and convenience, latter-day Obscurantism founds its modest claim to believe useful and consoling things which do not happen to impose themselves on our reason as true.

But beyond this point it passes immediately to the right of teaching such desirable things which we ourselves cannot believe, but other persons luckily still can. If you and I see no good reason why virtue and vice should get their deserts in Heaven and Hell, it does not very often happen that the advantageous results of such a doctrine enable us to believe it. But 'tis a fact of daily occurrence that these advantageous results induce us to teach eternal punishment to those who do not already disbelieve in it; or at all events to oppose ourselves to anything that should awaken such disbelief. And from the right to teach or abet the teaching of what we cannot ourselves believe, Obscurantism goes one step further, to the *duty* of doing so. For in the eyes of Mr Crawley and M. Sorel, those twins (all unsuspicious of their twinship) born of M. Renan and his own imaginary Abbess of Jouarre, it is evidently a sacred duty to teach the Church of England catechism to the lower classes, or to help Syndicalist agitators to lead the credulous French working-man by the nose.

In this propaganda of Vital Lies, lies the chief danger and odium of such applied Pragmatism; in this zeal for the moral edification of others, rather than in any individual paltering with truths, of which every one of us already unsuspectingly carries on about as much as is possible. Moreover, besides the intellectual objection to such Obscurantism there is a moral, that is to say, a

social one. Deceiving a man is tampering with his property, and jeopardizing his freedom. It is taking an undue advantage, accepting the principle of fair play and not playing fair. For we cannot teach what we know to be a myth or a fallacy, without first making those whom we teach believe in the good faith we are breaking.

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I

The Rehabilitation of Obscurity

WE latter-day Philosophers are obsessed by the efficacy of misconceptions, myths, Vital Lies avowed or unavowable. It is one of those inevitable reactions of Philosophic Thought, by which the dust-bin of facts and theories discarded by one fashionable synthesis becomes the Crusoe's wreck, the treasure-heap of contrary generalizations; until discardings and rehabilitations having shifted and sifted every possible datum and notion, the mind of man may at last learn a little less

hurry and cocksureness. In this manner the reaction against Rationalism (Mill's as much as Voltaire's) bestows a pleasing sense of high breeding (or at least gentility) whenever we assert the deficencies and limitations of Reason. Our thought, whatever it is, shall never be guilty of being crass! I employ that word because its squalid connotations bring home our intention of being on the contrary, select, initiate, esoteric.

And we display, or at least secretly enjoy, our initiation and esotericism by making light of Rationality and seating ourselves *ad dexteram* of the *Obscure*, the *Profound*, better still, the *Mystic, Forces of the Universe;* or, short of that, converse with our *Subconscious*, our *Intuitive Self*, emerging from such closed-door interviews with enigmatic wisdom on our barely unsealed lips. Such is, thanks to historical reaction, the attitude of the latter-day philosophic Beau Brummel.

Moreover, and quite apart from this, it happens that certain studies, psychology, mythology, ethnography, sociology, still in their presumptuous callowness, have brought to our notice a number of facts never before dreamed of, and among these we are naturally most struck by those most contradictory to what people had hitherto supposed. Here we have another reason for the attention bestowed on what, for brevity, I have symbolized under Ibsen's expression of Vital Lies, and, of course, for the importance in all fashionable schemes

of welfare and progress, of notions like Renan's *Ombres* and *Ombres d'une Ombre.*

Now, far be it from me to deny the existence, even the occasional advantage, of such Vital Lies. All I protest against is our latter-day neglect of the every-day, humdrum, taken for granted, paramount importance of *Vital Truths.* We forget that compared with a substance a shadow is a rare and negligible occurrence; let alone that if there were no substances there would be no shadows, no, nor *shadows of shadows* either.

For instance, we are impressed by the primitive belief that the success of a bear-hunt may depend upon preliminary abstinence, chastity, and ascetic practices, and we recognize that such a misconception must have done much for the moral habits and standards of bear-hunters. But we overlook, just because we take for granted, that for one useful misconception there have been a hundred correct notions which have likewise furthered the establishment of codes and habits. We despise the familiar fact that every justified forecast or analogy, every correct analysis or synthesis (say that the whole is greater than its parts or that similar causes produce similar results), is creating a habit, an ideal of intellectual honesty, that every utensil manufactured or implement used is teaching self-restraint, attention, and thoroughness; that every barter or load is establishing the sanctity of promises; nay, that no infant can be

reared without a prodigious output of self-sacrificing virtue. And as to the tillage of the ground, what myth has ever called forth and consolidated by inexorable repetition so much postponement of present advantage, so much reverent steadfastness and efficiency, as has this great eternal lesson that Nature gives in proportion to man's best effort? But these are, luckily for mankind, everyday, habitual, humdrum matters. And mankind, especially Man-of-Letters-kind, is, by a legitimate fear of boring people, debarred from calling attention to what everyone already knows. Now philosophers, ever since they have ceased being what used to be called "Natural Philosophers," that is, men of science, happen to be men of Letters, and therefore pursued by the Man of Letters' terror of the Obvious.

II

Why we write *Truth* on our Signboard

Reading all these ingenious discussions of the non-logical elements which go to make up our religious beliefs—William James, and Venn and Tyrrell, and Crawley and Sorel—one point keeps striking me more and more: to wit, that in the beliefs on which practical action is based, such elements are always diminished and oftenest eliminated. If the personality, the

emotions and aspirations of the believer, were allowed a voice in physics, nay, in the most rule-of-thumb housewife's science, such as they nowadays claim for themselves in religion and in philosophy, we should not be able to navigate, to till the ground, to breed cattle, or to cook a meal. Indeed, that the gradual weeding-out of such emotional reasons for belief has not taken place in religious and philosophic thought, suggests (it seems to me) that both religion and philosophy (or what passes for such talk) bearing on the practical life of civilized men, that their function, like that of art, is to vent impulses, construct ideal frameworks for emotion, and thus conduce not to practical decisions but to the soul's health and well-balanced activity. We are beginning to recognize that certain among the philosophic writers who have most influenced us, say Schopenhauer, Carlyle, Emerson, Tolstoi, are not so much thinkers as poets—*lyrists* as my friend Halévy has called one of the greatest of them, Nietzsche—men who have applied passionate temperamental onesidedness to expressing the various modes of spiritual being requisite (all of them) for our complete and balanced emotional and imaginative life.

At that rate, you will say (inclining as my reader probably may, to side rather with my adversaries than myself) at that rate, the element of personality, of desire, call it what you choose, deflecting our thought, has, after all, a *practical* function in our lives? Un-

doubtedly; but the practical function belonging to imagination and self-expression, not to Truth. Music, for instance, has a practical, vital function in wakening emotion, sometimes to vent and void it artificially, more often (and in its nobler forms) to discipline and purify it into harmony. Yet this very real service fulfilled by music in our individual and racial life, does not make us call a Beethoven quartet *true*. The difference between art on the one hand and religion and philosophy on the other, lies just in this, that in order to commend itself to our acceptance, art does not (need not) pretend to be more than a pleasure and a refreshment, leaving its deep utility to individual and race to be deduced or guessed (or neither) just from this modest, venerable fact of pleasantness. Whereas religion and philosophy (not always pleasant) have sprung originally from a *bona fide* practical search for truth. (Why do suns scorch, and rains quicken, pestilences rage? and so forth), and have continued to deal in truth, to say they furnish truth, long after they had made over to scientific thought the very wish that it be sought. Why? Perhaps because, lacking the straightforward attractiveness of art, religion and philosophy would have found less *clients* had they written upon their signboard: "This is the shop for soothing, stimulating, bracing, useful dreams and mistakes; the Great Emporium of Vital Lies."

III

The Surface of Things and the Depths of the Ego

"Comparée à l'ignorance, du moins à l'ignorance consciente, la connaissance est sans doute ane possession de son objet," writes M. Lévy-Brühl. "Mais comparée à la participation que réalise la mentalité prélogique, cette possession n'est jamais qu'imparfaite, insuffisante et comme extérieure. Connaître, en général, c'est objectiver ; objectiver, c'est projeter hors de soi, comme quelque chose d'étranger, ce qui est à connaître. Quelle communion intime au contraire, les représentations de la mentalité prélogique n'assurent-elles pas entre les êtres qui participent les uns des autres ! L'essence de la participation est que précisement toute dualité s'y efface, et qu'en dépit du principe de la contradiction le sujet est à la fois lui-même et l'être dont il participe. . . L'effort rationnel pour connaître Dieu semble à la fois unir le sujet pensant à Dieu et l'en éloigner. La nécessité de se conformer aux exigences loigiques s'oppose aux participations entre l'homme et Dieu qui ne sont pas représentables sans contradiction. La connaissance se réduit ainsi à fortpeu de chose. Mais quel besoin de cette connaissance rationnelle a le fidèle qui se sent uni à son Dieu ? La conscience qu'il a de la participation de son être à l'essence divine

ne lui procure-t-elle pas une certitude de foi au prix de laquelle la certitude logique sera toujours quelque chose de pâle, de froid, de presque indifférent? Cette experience d'une possession intime et complète de l'objet, possession plus profonde que toutes celles dont l'activité intellectuelle peut être l'origine, fait sans doute le ressort des doctrines dîtes anti-intellectualistes. Ces doctrines reparaissent périodiquement et à chaque réapparition elles retrouvent faveur. Car elles promettent ce que ni la science positive pure ni les autres doctrines philosophiques ne peuvent se flatter d'atteindre: le contact intime et immédiat avec l'être, par l'intuition, par la compénétration, par la communion réciproque du sujet et de l'objet, par la plaine participation, en un mot, que Plotin a décrite sous le nom d'extase. Elles montrent que la connaissance soumise aux formes logiques est impuissante à surmonter la dualité, qu'elle n'est pas une possession véritable, qu'elle demeure à la surface extérieure des choses."

Nothing could be a better example of the latter-day recrudescence of just such mystical tendencies than this very passage from a thinker who has done so much to describe (by the study of primitive ideas) and define this, which he calls the *pre-logical* or mystical stage of thought, the stage when qualities have not yet been grouped into things, and feelings, desires, and moods grouped as part of ourselves; when emotions and not

observation determine the coalescence of associations; and when no principle of contradiction has yet cleared away confusion of time and place and identity. In this passage M. Lévy Brühl, whatever his ostensible philosophy, is implicitly accepting the Bergsonian conception of an *obscure knowledge*, when he says that "la connaissance soumise aux formes logiques, n'est pas une possession véritable, qu'elle demeure à la surface extérieurs des choses." Let us think over those two last sentences, let us try and run to ground these two meanings, placed in opposition to one another: "real possession" and "surface of things." And let us begin by the second of these rival and, it would seem, incompatible expressions. What is the *surface of things*? In the present connection it means, in the first place, something less than the *whole* of things; it means two dimensions instead of three; it means comparative poverty of our knowledge. But it means something more also, and this is made obvious by the recurrent word "penetration": a surface is that which checks our progress, it is that into which, continuing our own movement, we cannot *penetrate*. There is therefore in this talk of the *surface of things* already a reference to conditions of our own as distinguished from conditions and qualities of the *things* we are thus said to know only on this surface; and this reference to ourselves it is important to remember. Well! now let us ask ourselves in what sense the rational, the objective know-

ledge of things can be justly termed *superficial*? Not in the sense of its lacking a dimension, of its allowing our thoughts to move only up and down while refusing their entrance into the solid mass of the subject. For rational, objective knowledge means on the contrary that we can give ourselves a representation of the various qualities of things and their relations to one another, not only in the three dimensions of space, but in the more numerous dimensions of time and of every other reference; *objective knowledge* means that we can send our thoughts from any of a hundred points of view, through the known universe not only as across a map, or as down by a shaft or diving-bell, or up as by a balloon, but also analytically as through a series of microscopes, synthetically as through telescopes embracing more and more of the firmament. Such is rational knowledge: it is the making of intellectual tracks in every direction and so closely interwoven and intermeshed as to leave out less and less of that reality which exists as simultaneity, but which we can think (as we can move in it materially) only in a mitigated consecutiveness. Now what is the difference between this and "real possession" of things? And what is the element the latter can give, and whereof the intellectual dealing with things is thus said to defraud us. We shall understand if we pick up a word, which I asked you to earmark, the word "*penetration*." *Penetration!* But

our thoughts *have* penetrated through the known universe, and are constantly penetrating through it, from ever new points, in ever new directions and dimensions, until the whole of human thought nets things round, not like the latitudes and longitudes of a globe, but in every mode of penetration. Indeed, such objective, disinterested "grasping" of wholes is the precise reverse of the one-sided interest with which desire and practical purpose concentrate upon a single quality or group of qualities and disregard all the other "sides" and "ways" which happen not to be in immediate relation with themselves. What does the man who eats a fruit know of its chemistry and botany? What even the man who grafts the tree, with his thoughts bent on that and fruit production, know of the relation with one another of tree and fruit and soil, and air, beyond just what his "interest" requires. What does the mother know of the life of the embryo save that its movements fill her with hope and rapture and awe? What does the lover know of the beloved except the qualities which he loves and the fact of his loving? And what does the religious ecstatic (since we are back again at the "Varieties of Religious Experiences") know about God except the assurance that God is present and near and is all-sufficient for his wishes. Nay, the religious mystic has, at all times, shown amazing indifference to any possible aspects of

the divinity other than those benignantly turned towards himself:

> "Confutatis maledictis.
> Flammis acribus addictis,
> Voca me cum benedictis."

And when, like Dante's Piccarda, the mystic has been safely called among the blessed, he or she is resigned not only to other blessed ones living in closer neighbourhood to the Centre of Love, but resigned apparently to the eternal horrors of hell in the world's bowels below. "In sua voluntade è nostra pace" means that you concern yourself with only that much of the supreme will which happens to contribute to your own peace. For there we have got to the point: the possession which rational comprehension does *not* give is the possession *by our desires*; *and the surface* which we seem to encounter, is resisting not to our understanding, but to our emotions. This rational universe can be penetrated into in every direction, but on one condition, that we shall modestly seek it for itself, that we be interested in it, that we leave our desires and passions at the door. That door through which our self-feeling cannot pass, is *the surface* it complains of and off which it feels itself repelled. Beyond that boundary lie the fields of knowledge, lies the realm of *being*, that is to say, of *that which is*, as distinguished from that which *I feel* and *I* WANT. And by one of the most amazing of egoistic delusions,

the mystical thought of all time has taken that exclusion for an inclusion, it has called its passionate abysming of itself in itself *penetration into the reality of things*; it has mistaken the obscure ebbings and flowings, and quiverings and shrinkings of its inner, perhaps its bodily, microcosm, for a profounder experience of the Universe; and, like the eastern ecstasy-monger, it has taken its own fixedly contemplated navel, that memento of mere vegetative life, for the hub of all existence.

And this penetration into itself, this submerging in its own innermost processes, is what a certain philosophy is offering us once more as the truer possession of reality!

It is more satisfactory. Such is the latter-day commendation of this *profound, intimate* penetration beyond the surface of things, that surface which is their boundary, and as much their nature as our nature is also *our* boundary. It is not merely satisfactory to be concerned with ourselves and our modes of being, and to insist upon them, it is also necessary and legitimate. But on one condition: we must recognize that it is *ourselves* we are dealing with. Let us say: "I wish," "I want," "I love," "I make," but not *it is.*

And here, perhaps, comes in the great hidden educator and moraliser, *Art.* Art, through the infinite generations, has taught us to give to ourselves the emotional

satisfactions which reality refuses, to carve the idol and build the temple instead of thinking that we have seen the divinity; in more modern days, to build up sounds into the expression of those modes of feeling which we cannot obtain strong and pure enough in our own lives; and, by the poet's, by the writer's craft to allow each individual to gather his associations into groups dominated consciously by the heart's desire. I have called Art a great educator and moraliser; for, among other important functions, Art has taught us to deal fully aware with a world yonside of truth and error; in so far, to distinguish between what *we want* and *what is*, and, even if only in such matters as these, to be lucid and honest.

IV

Contact and Sight, Instinct and Knowledge

Modern obscurantism is always suggesting, and occasionally proclaiming, that there is truth in ideas which minister directly to our feelings, as distinguished from the truth of ideas answering not to such emotional needs, but to the alluvium of objective impressions which we call *experience*. Subjective phenomena, these philosophers tell us, are also and equally part of our experience. Of course; but only when considered *objectively*. And it is only thus objectively regarded

that subjective phenomena become legitimate parts of ideas and amenable to the distinction of being true or false. My weariness, my dislike or my longing become assets to knowledge only inasmuch as I think of them as experienced. But however much they may *influence* my ideas, they cannot form part of my ideas so long as experienced. And however much they may *influence* my ideas, they cannot form part of my ideas so long as they are only felt, and are not yet thought of.

The lack of this little distinction, simple and yet elusive, is responsible for a great part of all *will-to-believe* Pragmatism, and is what vitiates (so far as I can grasp it) the systematic portion of Bergson. The philosophers of the Past, little concerned with psychology, did not bring subjective phenomena into count as part of the really existing; they treated a delusion as non-existent, because the delusion was "empty." Modern philosophers of the psychological school (and remark that Bergson, like James, is eminently a psychologist, recognising that delusions exist, and are potent) are tempted to regard the something about which people are deluded as being true because those people are truly deluded; although one might answer, in an Irish manner, that a *true* delusion cannot *truly* exist.

There seems to be a relation, a relation which is perhaps in reality an attitude, between our hold on

reality and our possibility of getting outside ourselves, one might almost say our altruism. We *know* in proportion as we transcend our own needs and desires, since these are directed to only one or two qualities of things, while our thought unites many qualities and possibilities, making things cubic, placing them in a third dimension and in complex relation, not to ourselves only, but to one another. An *existence* is essentially a more or less thought-out group of actual and potential qualities, a combination of past, present and future experiences, and not the experiences which we think of as ours, but the experiences also of minds which we think of as like our own. There goes a certain altruism, as I said, and a certain unselfish imagination, to the conception of realities, for that conception, that *alter*, is gained on the margin left by the consciousness of our own present states, hence it seems to me (and in direct opposition to Bergsonian enshrining of *intuiton*) that our least imperfect and incomplete knowledge is precisely the knowledge least directly connected with practice and least steeped in self-regarding emotion. Practice takes into account a minimum of relations between objective qualities, and feeling takes those few objective qualities that concern itself; but this narrow experience has the warmth and vividness of our ego and its activities; the warmth of our circulation and the vividness of our movements. And this warmth and vividness, which is of ourselves, has led certain thinkers

(as it had led poets long ago and mystics) to the notion that need and practice, desire and satisfaction, are the very perfection of knowing. Latter-day philosophy tends to identify knowledge with intuition, and even with the instinct which pushes an animal to adapt its proceedings it knows not to what or wherefore; such philosophy tends to measure knowledge by its obscurity and even its unconsciousness. And such philosophy seems made on purpose for those people who, ever since always, have spoken of *knowing God* as equivalent to *loving* or *wanting* God, and to whom truth is not fulfilled anticipation, but satisfied desire.

Would it not be correct, on the contrary, to compare the difference between knowledge and instinct with the difference between sight and bodily contact? Like seeing, knowledge is reconstruction; it implies not merely memory, but expectation; like bodily contact, instinct sets the reflexes at work, and the whole creature quivering with its own warmth or cold. All individual life begins with contact and instinct, and all life abuts there, but seeing and knowing are those links of the perpetually necessary human rhythm by which alone it enlarges and tends to become commensurate with the rhythm of the universe.

V

Bergson's Direct Data

There seems to be, as Bergson is always teaching (but with another corollary !), an inevitable obscurity about what this psychologist in philosopher's garb has called the *direct data* (*données immédiates*) of our consciousness, an obscurity which I explain psychologically by our *cœnesthesia* being, in the normal state, remarkably deficient in such marks as help us to localize sensations. Indeed, these direct data, this *knowledge from within*, this knowledge from what Professor James alludes to as "subconscious regions," consists mainly in modes of our activity; these inner data are *hows* rather than *whats*, they are facts of succession, co-existence, repetition, tension, slackness, effort, relief, direction; above all, facts of grasping forwards, shrinking backwards, seeking, avoiding—in short, of preference and repulsion. This is what I would call, rather than the *subconscious*, the purely subjective, the absolutely *inner* self; it constitutes, I think, the very essence of the chaotic dark consciousness of our life.

Now there would seem to be (and it is easy to guess why) a constant tendency to connect these fragmentary and chaotic items of inner consciousness with the data of our outward-dealing senses, and, while shaping our

outer sensations into our inner modes, also to give these inner modes a contents, a " meaning " consonant with our outer sensations. For our inner data are few and obscure, because they are the facts of vital processes constantly repeated, largely therefore automatic and entirely intimate and indispensable. Our outer data are endlessly various because they depend on endlessly changing outer circumstances, and also extremely distinct because they are classified by the highly specialized outer sense-organs; the data of sight and hearing, for instance, thoroughly separate from one another, those of taste and smell already less so, and nearer to the inner sensitiveness; touch, temperature, and the muscular sense still closer to the cœnesthesia.

The safety of our existence depends upon the peripheric consciousness being brought into relation with our inner activities, and our inner adjustments being regulated by our outer sensations; hence a perpetual inter-play between the outer and the inner data, the facts of the peripheral senses being assimilated to the inner experience.

There is, I imagine, a necessary *outward* tendency of our activities, our peripheral functions, stoking, so to speak, for our inner ones, as the primitive sea creatures draw into themselves the water wherein they float, as we ourselves imbibe air, and as our constituent cells imbibe the liquids in which they steep. On the other hand, we are perpetually throwing off not only our

waste but our surplusage: generation and all making and fashioning are of this order. Hence there is every reason why there should be a permanent exchange or change of place between our inner and our outer data, why the modes of the inner life (modes of motion, energy, sequence, volition, connection, etc.), should be attributed by what the Germans calls *Einfühlung* to the data of the senses, why all inner data which are not needed to regulate our adjustments (pleasure-pain data particularly) should be projected onto the periphery. But from this give-and-take there arises also that our inner states, and in proportion as they are difficult to localize, tend to explain themselves by such reference to the outside, to the non-ego; in other words, we get the habit of giving our inner states the support, the explanation, of outer facts, of finding objective reasons for our own elations and depressions, our inner cravings and shrinkings. This tendency to seek external reasons, motives, sometimes excuses, for our own inner conditions, has doubtless been increased by the fact that outer impressions, being not only very various but independent of us in their variation, would harass and interrupt our inner consciousness if it did not, so to speak, use them up for its own purposes, and as a framework, often an incorrectly connected framework, for itself.

Thus it happens that whenever we want certain inner states to continue and intensify, instead of being

interrupted and confused, we attach them, by automatic habit, to an outer cause. We beat back the inroads of the outer world by establishing the headquarters of our own inner conditions in it or in what seems to be it; we are not able to keep up any synthesis of inner consciousness without thus allying it to the thought, if not the reality, of something outside us; our inner life is like that most perfect egoist, Meredith's Sir Willoughby, requiring to bolster up his ego on the personality of tyrannized-over or admiring fellow-beings. For the human soul, by the necessities of human life, is directed outwards, and our whole existence an inner-outer rhythm. In this lies the explanation of Art. Certain desirable inner congruities of function require the prop, the framework of outer circumstances; and it is given us by Art. The work of Art is what enables us to obtain an uninterrupted, intensified (maximum and continuum) synthesis of our own most beneficial modalities of being; it makes us live intensely and harmoniously.

The study of Æsthetics sheds considerable light upon all this side of Religion. The God, like the work of Art, like the lover's or idolater's *Fetish*, is (among other things) a device for reviving or producing certain syntheses of feeling in ourselves, syntheses which may last a second, or, through constant repetition, be spread almost uninterruptedly over a lifetime. The difference is that in the case of Art we do not attribute independent objective existence to our own states; we know that we,

or others like us, have arranged the thing; we know that we are contemplating to please ourselves, and that the contemplated object has been made for such contemplation. In the case of Religion we muddle this fact up with the quite different fact of the existence of an independent Universe, the Universe which sensations testify to, and we persuade ourselves that we are serving someone else when we are only serving ourselves. Hence the greater sincerity of Art. Hence also Art's far lesser efficacy. For Art requires an Artist; we are not able, most of us, to make beautiful scaffoldings for our feelings; we have to accept them from the imperious natures of greater men, who leave us only a small amount of freedom (irrelevance, misinterpretation) and bid us feel as *they choose* rather than as *we do*. Now in the case of Religion the individual believer can tinker at his divinity; his God is hidden in his own mind, and he improves or defaces the Idol far more freely than he could venture to do the work of Art.

VI

"Pippa Passes"

By the delusory transfer of the various states of the soul or its various activities, we are for ever mistaking our attitudes for ideas. When Pippa and Browning says, "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world,"

this is the expression, not of the idea which it literally signifies, but of an attitude in which Pippa and Browning are readier to accept the argument for God being in His Heaven than the contrary one, and readier to see what is right in the world than what is wrong. And an attitude is, at bottom, an emotional condition. Pippa's emotion is optimistic, and hence Pippa looks rather at optimistic explanations of the universe than at pessimistic ones. We cannot *Think* an emotion, still less put it into the logical form in which we most often transfer the contents of our consciousness to others, or register it for ourselves; so we lay about us for some idea, or rather most often some ready-made set of words, suitable to the emotion, whatever it is, and we register or communicate *that*. What is at the bottom of Pippa's mind, the fact her remark really answers to, is, "I am well and pleased, the Sun is bright," or perhaps a certain musical theme, say, of Mozart.

VII

"Pluralistic Universes"

Reading W. James's *Pluralistic Universe* and re-reading Bergson's three great books.

That logic should be false to Reality: surely not. Our religion, our art may indeed be fabricated by ourselves to render our life more endurable; delusions,

things made to *suit us* and *by us*. But in order to fabricate these delusions, or any other kind of Vital Lie, we are obliged to postulate something outside and independent of them, namely, reality. Analogy is experience; a delusion is a false analogy. If our judgments were acts of free choice, instead of being imperatives constraining us, the scene-painter could not delude us into accepting his arrangement of verticals on the flat for horizontals in cubic space. Similarly, in order to please ourselves with "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world," we have to coerce ourselves by certain analogies. If I happen to be happy this morning, happiness exists, and if happiness exists, other people may also be happy, etc., etc. All employment of human thought for human satisfaction depends upon the existence of thought unconditioned by human satisfaction, thought which before becoming our servant must be recognized, like the statesman or general, or even policeman, as our master. And all arrangement of things or notions to suit human needs —needs physiological, æsthetic, moral, or "transcendental"—presupposes that man exists in a *milieu* independent of his thoughts and volitions, and which can therefore react upon these thoughts and volitions in the way desired.

As regards Pragmatism, it does not furnish us with a *Pluralistic Universe*, but with a thinker who interrupts his thinking, an experimenter who breaks off his ex-

periment, whenever it suits his feelings. Pragmatistic thought resembles the artist's thought, in so far as both not only build for the Heart's Desire, but also (as Omar Khayyam forgot to mention), break off and sweep away its own construction whenever the logical necessities, *i.e.* the *peculiarities independent of his wishes*, begin to bore or to annoy it. The Pluralistic Pragmatist takes advantage of the fact (for even he must build with facts!) that we need not always *think on and on*, that there are other subjects and other points of view; in short, that although the independent universe rolls on in its established manner, with or without the music of the spheres and the hymn of Goethe's archangels, human attention can turn upon its ear and, for a while, dream of its own juicy cabbages or intoxicating, effulgent roses.

VIII

That Poor Drudge, Reason

That *intellectualism*, as its disparagers call it, has been fostered by human practicality, I think no one could deny, because it seems likely that, seeing man's far from excessive energies, only such activities would have developed as were practically valuable. But that "intellectualism" should be due to the manufacturing

practicality in especial, to man's intending and willing and making, or rather that the limitations of human intellect should be thus explained, is a totally different assumption. Those who make this assumption (the Bergsonians, for instance) forget that the limitations of the human intellect are largely explicable by its acting with far more consecutiveness than simultaneity; a fact in its turn explicable by the things which concern us not concerning us all at the same moment, existing in various points of space because they are many, whereas each of us being only one, exists at one point at a time; we are obliged to shift our point of view and alter our focus, and hence all " intellectual knowledge " tends to analysis. Thus the very sense of a *whole* seems to exclude an adequate appreciation of separate parts. We have to think the *microscopic* aspect at a different moment, in a different manner, from the *macroscopic*; the mountain range as a separate act from the mountain's component earths and ores; and when we think *both* together we think vaguely and rather emptily and verbally, or else in a rapid oscillation between the two. But that this defect—if it is a defect and not a richness—should be due to *practicality* I fail to see, except in so far as practicality is identified with life itself. Rather it is explained by our double peculiarity of possessing locomotion, hence successive experience, and specialized analytic senses (sight, taste, smell, hearing, and touch), which not only afford a multitude of

different impressions, but capture into their laboratory different natural phenomena. To say that practicality has made intellect analytical is merely saying that practicality had to conform to the fact of such consecutiveness and analysis. But practicality tends, on the contrary, to synthetic perception, to the predominance of a need, of an intended action fastening on to a single quality or group of qualities, and globing them and itself in a narrowed down vision; for what can be narrower, more fragmentary than the instinctive reaction, upon the single datum of a single sense, as in the instinct of lower animals and of our own least conscious selves, which Bergsonism treats as a most complete knowledge? I sometimes wonder whether there is not a confusion in Bergsonians (William James, for instance), and even in Bergson himself: a false analogy snatched by their crepuscular thought, between practical manufacture and intellectual construction and whether this may not be the explanation of their notion of "practicality" having "disintegrated" reality into intellectual concepts? For if *practicality*, or *practicality's forced recognition of existing constitutions*, has analyzed and separated and classified our perceptions, it has also reconstructed them into the concentric and superposed synthesis wherewith we attempt to compass Reality. Thus our locomotion, our consecutiveness, make us measure and compare; the analytic habit of our specialized senses enables us to form scales of

qualities, and these we are able to break up and rebuild in various fashions.

Finally, I would deny that there is any inferiority in the intellectual necessity of analysis. To a creature who is but a small fragment of Reality, the whole of Reality cannot surely be a continuum; the more of Reality such a creature can apprehend the more that must be discontinuous, discrete, because attention is intermittent, and positions, points of view are various, and because specialized sense *is* specialized. We do not swim in a vague *over-all-ish* experience penetrating into us with equal force and provoking everywhere the same reactions, we move among alternating experiences, exposing partial surfaces thereto, and all our conscious life is the registration of their variety and alternation; indeed, but for alternation and variety, there could be no consciousness at all. And it is this alternating, various, discontinuous nature of our experience which gives to this experience its comparative universality; universality compared to what it would be if it were not thus alternate, various, and discontinuous. For if human experience were a continuum (as what lies beyond and beneath experience probably is) it would indeed not *contain* any limits, but it would be limited itself; we should not move within experience with that power of measurement and comparison, with that sense of similarity and difference which give command over the future as well as the present by organizing expecta-

tion and registering disappointment. In other words, "non-intellectualized" experience would also be far more partial, it would be as the experience of skin and viscera compared with the experience of sight and locomotion. It would, it seems to me, be purely subjective; experience of variations in our states, not that experience of a non-ego which implies the projection of some of our sensations into a *not-ourselves*, into a space constructed by our locomotion[1] out of our specialized senses, our separate and intermittent data; such experience would be all "I am" and no "It is." Now "It is" happens to be the name we give in life to what is called philosophically "Reality."

IX

Thought as Movement

All our thinking is done in terms of movement, and all our thinking is consecutive. We can pursue only one line of thought, make one series of connections, at the same fraction of time. But we know that besides the line we have just been pursuing, besides the points we have just been connecting, we have pursued other lines and connected other points; and we know that we can

[1] *Cf.* M. Ribot, "Le Rôle latent des Images Motrices," in *Revue Philosophique*, March 1912.

do so again. Moreover, we know that we have *alternately* pursued the same and other lines, connected the same and different points, and that our expectation, based upon similar experience, of returning to lines previously pursued, to points previously connected, has been in many cases justified, we can return on to the road to the North which we left to pursue the road to the South, and the roads East and West which we pursued before that. We are able to alternate the pursuits of these different directions, and we consequently infer that *these roads co-exist in the intervals of our pursuing them;* that these directions *could* be pursued at the moment that *we do not* pursue them. All this constitutes a sense of the possibility of simultaneous activity if *we could give it*, in other words, a sense of the co-existence of possibilities of sensation and action if we could feel or do in sufficient simultaneity. *Such possibility of co-existence* means the construction of a *space*, a *somewhere* in which we could move alternately in various directions; and in which things (or if you prefer mere ideal lines of direction) are waiting, so to speak, for us to turn to them in our alternating movement. Meanwhile, the knowledge that we have had various grouped sensations at various moments, and that these grouped sensations have reappeared when we followed along other groups of sensations, similarly binds up our various and separate sense-impressions into that belief in their potential existence which is

what we mean when we believe in the *existence of things*.

When we say " while so and so was going on, such another was going on elsewhere," we mean that if at a given moment, we had removed our attention, let us say, from the Paris rabble marching to Versailles in 1790, we might have witnessed Mozart directing an opera at Vienna. We mean that the two events were contemporaneous although we can only think them consecutively, and that there must have been different portions of space for them to go on. Moreover, we mean that if we could have received two different and excluding groups of impressions, those of the marching crowd on a road and of Mozart at his pianoforte in a theatre, there would have been wherewithal to furnish us with those groups of impressions; and this again is that grouping together of potential, though not actual, impressions which we call *the real existence of things*.

Now one of our greatest intellectual difficulties, perhaps the one which has cast most slur on the intellect's powers, is just this necessity of taking up the threads we have let go, the lines we are no longer moving along; in fact, the necessity of our thought being, like our words, discontinuous, discursive in many dimensions and directions of time and space; subject to the *ands* and *buts* of our varying movements.

X

Reason as Revelation

Might one not say, reversing Bergson's notion, that reasoned knowledge is that message from outer Reality, which has been able to penetrate through our obscure preferences and habits; nay, that logic is that minimum of sense of the ways of Reality required for even our hide-bound existence; the evidence of what *we do not expect or wish* registered in those very habits which represent our safety? And, so far from *thought*, as Bergson has it, defacing the *non-ego*, is it not rather thought which brings to the ego, to the creature sewn up in its skin, soaked in its liquids and imperfectly windowed by its senses, the requisite, the modicum of knowledge of what exists beyond it? For, after all, it is *thought*, it is *logic*, which has suggested the inference that reality transcends our experience, that reality cannot be coped with, perhaps, by our logic. It is thought which, revealing all we know of Reality, assures us at the same time that Reality exceeds, because it contains, this revelation.

XI

Limitations of Thought and Limitations of Thinkers

Much thought (the fact keeps striking me afresh) is but the reinstatement of fragments of truth eliminated in a previous summing up, in the synthesis (usually by some one else) of a few other fragments of truth. This lamentable besetting sin of all statement—or perhaps I should have said incurable laziness and cocksureness of all who state—has something to do, I think, with our latter-day depreciation of thinking as such, with its addition that thought is not commensurate with fact, and its innuendo that all we call truths are partial falsehoods. But suppose Thought applied not primarily to stating, persuading, and dissuading, but, once in a way, to plain *understanding* of things, should we not, in that case, get something fairly commensurate with the experience which it embodied and connected? And if we considered no longer the Thought detached by the statement, the enunciation of individuals and schools at given moments, but the body of thought of all men at all times, we might surely recognize in it something as vast and various as *experience*, and able to deal efficiently with it. But individual Thought (including that of schools and

trades) has not merely organized itself for fragmentary purposes of practice, but it has learned many of its proceedings in the course of acting upon other minds, curtailing itself for easy communication, foreshortening itself for points of view, let alone that it has contracted all the vicious habits of personal advocacy and personal domination.

XII

Farewell to Vital Lies

Whenever the time have come that we who teach others (perhaps because we cease to do so) shall have recognized the mischief of thus hoodwinking the good faith of those whom we teach, and thereby lowering the standard of intellectual honesty and destroying the credit of all teaching; whenever that distant time have arrived, it is quite possible that the word *lie* will be dropped out of similar discussions, or rather the words *correct* or *incorrect* be substituted, in matters of opinion, for the words *true* and *false*. It may be not only a proof of obscurantistic habits, but a mark of imperfect understanding and of the habit of small personal considerations, to connect what we think about Nature and Man with such notions as that of honesty on one hand or fraud on the other. To do so shows that low as may be commercial integrity, intellectual honesty is

lower still, since it has not yet established a system of credit.

Be this as it may, we can still watch our educated selves and neighbours failing to discriminate, *e.g.* in the sort of *Researches* called *psychical or spiritualistic* because they deal with the hypothetical souls or spirits of the dead, instead of the obvious souls of the living—we can watch ourselves failing utterly to discriminate between testimony and proof; indeed, in more practical questions even, it is still largely the character of the witness which helps to hang or to release, quite as much as the nature of what that respectable witness happens to allege. Parents and educators, let alone Governments and Nations (Tripoli, Nov. 1911) are still apt to take offence as if doubt of their statements implied doubt of their honour. Authority is still the basis of parental as it is of military and sacerdotal discipline; authority in the sense of "do you call me a *liar*?" as opposed to authority as presumable competence of knowing. And just now the Pope has taken to making priests swear that Modernism is wrong and the old theology is right, absolutely on the principle of the continental swashbuckler who runs you through the body for "doubting his word," or contradicting too hotly. And it is not only characteristic but perhaps advantageous that such should have become the Pope's methods of carrying his point about, let us say, the authorship of the Gospel of St John.

Meanwhile the human mind will be freed from superstition in proportion as it recognizes that a *fallacy* need not be a *lie*, that error is more plentiful than truth because error is tentative and truth final. Moreover, that error when widespread implies no intellectual (and still less moral) Obliquity, since it is nine times out of ten the inevitable result of *how* we know and *what* we know. So that while error may be exploited or clung to or artificially kept up, there is very little chance (or need) of its having been invented on purpose to take men in. Perhaps the death blow to what our grandfathers called "Priestcraft," would be the recognition that so far from having been fabricated to keep the vulgar in its proper place, as Voltaire, and (which is odder), Plato also opined, all myths are the inevitable outcome of the honest thinking of a given time or people.

Furthermore, the most important lesson taught me by all this examination of the *Will to believe*, is precisely that this *Will* is no act of volition at all, but the unguessed, usually unconscious action of habits and desires, which close up certain channels of thought and deepen others into stagnant pools without an issue.

I have even caught myself wondering whether Human life has really ever required Lies. But it has wanted certainties where certainty was unattainable; hopes and consolations where there was reason for neither. Above all, Human Life has wanted rest for tired minds before they had got to a rational resting-

place, and freedom for busy ones to think of something else. So, when all is said and done, Vital Lies represent human weakness, human sloth, and human dullness, above all, perhaps human impatience, which cuts down the tree to eat the fruits. In other words, it seems as if Vital Lies meant the need of the moment and the individual against the need of the race and of the future.

XIII

Vital Lies as the Handiwork of the Gods

And now, after so much discussion with others and with myself, so much backwards and forwards, how do I stand toward Vital Lies?

I think thus:

Vital Lies are among the devices with which the Gods, possibly blind (perhaps because their eyes are unlike ours), shape us and our destinies out of the material of our own desires and powers. But Vital Lies are not articles of common or domestic utility, to be made by Man for Man's own using, still less things which men can discuss, and of which they can lend one another the pattern!

CHAPTER III

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I

HUMANISM

AND since I am now soliloquizing, saying what has come into my private head about vital truths and vital lies, it is fitting I should make a confession.

If I have shown, peradventure, lack of moderation and sweetness towards *Will-to-believe Pragmatism*, it is due in part to the exasperated recognition that this doctrine, and these doctors, have distorted views which are mine, or which resemble my own: utilitarianism, relativism, and the idea vaguely roughed out in the saying that *Man is the Measure of All things*. In the

same way that they have wasted, discredited, *démonetisé*, as the French say, removed out of honest philosophical currency, that word *Pragmatism*, so excellently invented by Mr C. S. Peirce for his method of " making our ideas clear " by inquiring into those ideas' equivalents in expected facts ; so also they, in the person particularly of Doctor Schiller, have wasted another valuable word, " *Humanism*," by applying it, with the Protagorean dictum for which my friend Alfred Benn originally invented it, to a theory of " Making of Truth," and its correlative unmaking, or destroying of truth when that truth did not happen, as in the days of the Inquisition, to suit the requirements of " Humanity."

Now " Humanism " is the name that could have been given to views which, although not yet (and so much the better) formulated as a philosophic system, are already arising, and must arise more and more, with the daily growth of scientific habits on the one side, and of lay ethics on the other.

This *humanistic*, as distinguished from *anthropocentric* view could be roughly summed up as follows : Our human interests, our thoughts, are conditioned and limited by our constitution. Our constitution is limited, qualified by the Universe. But the only universe which can exist for *us* is the Universe which exists through the medium of those limitations and qualification of our constitution. We are our own centre of the Universe, because we cannot change our place in the

Universe. We are the Measure of All Things, because the only things we know of are known with reference to our standards. We are more important than the rest of things, because when we say *important* we are implying a relation to ourselves, a relation we can conceive as outside ourselves only by attributing the modes of our own experience to what exists beyond our own experience. The Universe has made and is still making us. But the only Universe we can conceive is the one constructed in our consciousness. This is the conclusion to be drawn, and which many of us have drawn, without formulating this principle that the importance of our ideas is their importance to us, but that their importance to us depends upon their representing not our wishes and purposes, but rather the something outside us whereby our wishes and purposes are themselves originated and conditioned. It is to this principle that I have long given in my mind (and other thinkers have doubtless done alike in theirs), some name like *Humanism*.

So, as I have just confessed, my quarrel with these self-styled Pragmatists has been exasperated by the fact of their having deflected this principle of thought's relativity yet certainty; this conception of the positive importance and comparative unimportance of Man's standards; and their having distorted it into a shambling sophistic that turns belief into choice and truth into expediency; a sophistic which, requiring belief in

truth for the efficacy of fallacy and falsehood, is *ipso facto* condemned to perpetual self-contradiction.

But instead of yielding to such irritation (and I crave pardon for every time I have done so) one ought rather to rejoice that the incoherences and tergiversations of this school of so-called Pragmatists (including the Pragmatistic myth-and-symbol-mongers and Practical Obscurantists) may result in more careful criticism and more rigorous selection of that other kind of Humanism, namely, of that conception of human standards and valuations which, without much formulations or promulgation, is being approached by the spontaneous convergence of scientific thought and utilitarian ethics.

II

Man the Measure

While the moralists and moralizing logicans calling themselves Pragmatists have given us leave to deal in Vital Lies by calling them truths so soon as they seem "better for us to believe," a more esoteric branch of Obscurantists have been telling each other that Vital Lies are one of the instruments by which Nature (sometimes called History) accomplishes her designs; and these philosophers (and each of us philosophers has been one such at least in "lost moments!") derive much

satisfaction from having so far penetrated the secret, been admitted into the confidence of that arch-Machiavel, the Unconscious, leading mankind with fallacies, falsehoods, superstitions, Myths, and all that magic-lantern business of "*ombres d'une ombre.*"

But is not this also perhaps a Vital Lie, delightful to our philosophic self-importance, and necessary, perhaps, to bridge the difficult transition from the status of priests, soothsayers, and poets, to the less tempting one of observers and classifiers of facts, and makers of nothing much more prophetic than weather forecasts? Are we not, many, all of us "thinkers," making up for loss of office round the throne of the Almighty, or in the dingier household of the Absolute, by this hinted at intimacy with the Unconscious, its "designs," its lack of "Morality," and its especially reprehensible (or, if you prefer, splendidly prodigal) Wastefulness?

For, in the first place, how can we be sure that *It* ("Life" formerly known as "Nature") is Unconscious, and if Unconscious, how can it have designs, or be moral or immoral, or economical or wasteful? Moreover, even supposing its unconsciousness to be so different from any unconsciousness of which we have experience, what right have we to suppose, as our chief philosopher of "Life" evidently does, that the Unconscious has been toiling and travailing to elaborate Consciousness, in plainer language, that "Life" has been organizing itself in view of producing (whatever

else besides) just you and me? For unless that production of something most uncommonly like present mankind had been one at least of Nature's or Life's "aims," we have no right, surely, to call it immoral when it does not conform to *our* morality, and still less *wasteful*, when it launches out into expenditure (let us say in microbes) which we, personally, should have avoided. For this much does seem plain, that while all experience and notion of "designs," "plan," "intention," "conduct" (whence moral and immoral, wasteful and economic), are taken from ourselves and are not necessarily applicable beyond ourselves; the plans, designs, and modes of conduct of anything so different from us as "Nature" or "Life," always supposing "Nature" or "Life" to have any, would evidently be as different from ours as Nature or Life is different from us, the plans of the "Whole" would surely be wider than those of the "Part," and the methods of the Unconscious could scarcely be judged, still less profitably adopted, by the Conscious.

For that is what it comes to. Not so much that we want, like Milton, "to justify the ways of God to man," but rather to justify the ways of man by those of . . . well, whatever modern philosophy may call the more constitutional successor of God. For instance, in this small matter of Vital Lies, *alias myths*. That mankind has blundered through a vast number of mistakes, false analogies, wrong classi-

fications, partial deductions and more partial inductions, *quid pro quos* and (to suit the words to the study of " Les Formes prélogiques de l'Intelligence ") *coqs à l'âne*, as shown in Totemism, and that, moreover, some good results may have occurred such as sundry prohibitions, purifications, and a general law-abidingness, from this blundering, all this suggests to some philosophical minds, such as Mr Crawley, and M. Sorel's, or let alone Renan's, that since myths and superstitions have been good enough for the *Unconscious* in its historical and prehistorical dealings with mankind, mankind or those enlightened classes or individuals possessing the Unconscious' secrets, need not, in their turn, be too fine to use them. " What God could dare to give, he dares to name," wrote Young of some eighteenth-century Walt Whitman; which we may paraphrase: What Nature, Life, History, Fate (or any other of the aliases of the Unconscious) dared to invent in order to make men moral and self-restraining and heroic, surely Mr Crawley may support, or M. Sorel may preach, in order to keep up that output of morality, self-restraint and self-sacrifice, without stickling with such purely human precepts as that which bids us *tell the truth and nothing but the truth.*

Now here I must return to my previous remark, namely, its being a mere human assumption to ascribe designs and methods to anything beyond human beings and animals greatly resembling them; and secondly,

its being quite illogical, once such designs and methods have been ascribed to the Unconscious, to imagine that the benefit or edification, or even the production of mankind, was precisely what those aims and methods intended to compass. Indeed, what we call the *Wastefulness of Nature* is surely a proof that if Nature was aiming at anything, it was not at pleasing the creatures whose life and pain she made so free with: we ourselves do not call it wastefulness when we breed cattle for the sake of their flesh and hides, though the cattle assuredly must consider our methods of feeding and shoeing ourselves excessively wasteful. Hence, there is nothing to tell us that when the Unconscious lavished centuries-full of human mistake and disappointment this was really to the end that these superstitions and myths should result in morality, heroism, or saintliness. The Unconscious may have been thinking of something quite different, and human morality, heroism, and saintliness have been, in *its* eyes (since the Unconscious is full of inchoate faculties) mere waste products, rubbish, slag, or shavings from some other bit of work.

Whence I conclude that we had better not take example save by ourselves, and better stick to one of the few educative certainties we possess, namely, that human morality, whether intentionally or unintentionally produced, is useful, indispensable to Man; that human logical habits are similarly requisite, and that one of the

items evolved by human morality and human logic is a respect for truth as such due to the fact that where we do not believe that a statement is true we refuse to act upon it. O small fellow human beings, we are a very microscopic, and perhaps quite negligible, portion of the Universe; but we are the portion we happen to be directly concerned with, and the only one through which we can, moreover, approach, interpret, the rest. Man is legitimately his own, since he is his *only* measure of all things, so long as he bears in mind that the instrument of mensuration may be "out" by a few millions of degrees.

Man is certainly not the centre of all things, but I do not see what else is to be his centre save himself!

III

The Teleology of Man, and the Teleology of the Universe

In connection with such views it is as well to reconsider the subject of teleology, with which latter-day obscurantism does a good deal of conjuring.

I conceive that the universe might do without any intelligence *outside* it, and yet contain and require intelligence, or rather let us call it consciousness, *inside* it. Indeed the presence of consciousness in creatures,

so far from proving, makes it easier to dispense with, the notion of consciousness in some sort of Creator. For such existing consciousness explains details in evolution which would remain obscure in its absence. According to this view, which is mine, the production or development of consciousness from some rudiment thereof inherent in living, who knows, in inorganic matter, would be a part of the automatic *modus operandi* of the cosmic mechanism; feeling in its most rudimentary forms, attraction, and repulsion, mere crude preference and aversion, being part of the stuff acted on by unconscious selection, and reacting on what we call the materiality of things by determining some of its groupings and shapings. Be this as it may, the presence of consciousness in the universe, so far from loosening the chain of causation, in reality tightens it; for feeling and knowing are the most easily recognized of all determinants, indeed the only determinant that is not a mere inference; we *see* a stone fall or a kettle rise, and *infer* cause and effect, but we *feel* our preferences and aversions pushing in one direction rather than another; we *feel* cause and effect in ourselves.

Pope's famous lines :—

> "And binding Nature tight in Fate
> Left free the human will,"

are so far wrong that the only *Fate*, the only necessary sequence of which we have *direct* knowledge, is precisely

that of our own feelings and volitions; and if we had no such experience of causal sequence in ourselves, we should not be able to attribute it to the outer world; there would be sequence, coincident and usual sequence, but not *Fate*, since Fate implies inevitable causation.

As it is with determinism, so it is with teleology. To say that there is no teleology in the outer universe may be a rash statement, but rash or not rash, it does not imply that there is no teleology in the human consciousness; indeed here again, as in the case of determinism, the only teleology of which we can be quite sure is precisely in the human consciousness, and more particularly in yours or mine. Any other is at best, an inference, correct or incorrect, but most often it is a mere metaphorical mode of speech, a case of what psychological æsthetics call *Empathy*, or projection of human modes of being into outer forms or objects.

With regard to any teleology outside of direct human self-experience it is important to recognize that such *intention*, inferred from our own experience, and attributed, logically or merely poetically, to what we call the universe, is an *intention* or *set of intentions*, which need not in the least coincide with the intentions we are aware of in *ourselves*. What we interpret as *intentions* in nature are *tendencies* which condition and limit one another; or more correctly, we human beings, whenever we find one of our own *bona fide* (because *felt*) tendencies checked or deflected, instantly suppose that

this can *happen only by the intervention of some intention different from the one of which we are ourselves conscious*. And by this system of inferences, more or less metaphorical and anthropomorphic, we get to think of a number of *Wills*, separate from, but coercing our own: the *Will of the Race*, the *Will of the Universe*, let alone the more venerable or old-fashioned *Will of God*; Wills all thought of on the pattern of those of our family and nation, limiting our own teleology, and obliging us to fulfil our own intentions by conformity with their larger and more powerful ones.

Now, once we have made it clear to ourselves that all this talk of other *Wills* than our own is a mere metaphor, and may possibly be a totally misleading one, there is no objection to continuing to talk about Teleology and to examining into a possible order or hierarchy of these various metaphorical or metaphysical Wills. We should, then, recognize that the Will of the Individual (about which, when it is yours or mine we do happen to be sure) is not necessarily directed to the same aims as is the Will (supposing there to be one) of the Race; still less to the same aims as would be the Will (if Will there were) of the Cosmos, or of God Almighty. For the Will of the Individual aims at *comfort*, meaning thereby a minimum of thwarting and a maximum of satisfaction of all possible desires. The Will of the Race or Species would aim at *survival*, since to that it sacrifices everything else by natural selection. And

the Will of the Universe or of the Divinity would aim, if one may use such a word in such a context, at *mere existence*, the whole, or omnipotence, being unable to will anything that it is not; God having theologically defined himself by the mere first person present of the verb *to be*, and the universe being philosophically definable as the third person of that same all-including yet empty form of speech. Hence we get a metaphorical or metaphysical consideration of *Wills actually felt* (to wit, our own) and Wills inferred or imagined. And this concentric arrangement is as follows: the Aim of the Race selects among the aims of the individual, among the proceedings which aim at his own comfort; the teleology of the Race kills or breeds; it uses or refuses individual's various desires for *its* sole end of Race survival. I say *Race survival*, because *race-improvement* is an aim of, and a shifting definition of, the cattle-breeder or the moralist, and *race-survival* may be attained by what both these persons would call deterioration or regression. And the teleology of the Universe in its turn selects among the various race teleologies, to the end (already attained) of the universe subsisting.

This schematic arrangement is interesting and perhaps instructive, but on one condition: if we remember that of all these three Teleologies or Wills, two are mere metaphors, mere attributions of our modes to what is unlike ourselves; but the third is a real

Teleology, a real purposefulness, a real choosing of what-hurts-least or pleases most; and that teleology is *Man's*.

The deterministic view of human progress is, therefore, that such progress is compassed not by seeking any final "good," still less by any remote intention of co-operating with the Race or the Universe, but by the conscious and unconscious shifting of our burden of desire and discomfort. If the individual subserves, as he calls it, consciously and willingly, the safety and progress of the race, this is inasmuch as the safety and progress of the race are objects of his thoughts and desires, the race is part of himself; nay, the universe also, because the race and the universe for which he is ready to sacrifice smaller satisfactions are part of his present consciousness, and inasmuch conducive to his greater satisfactions or dissatisfactions.

IV

The Immorality of Immortals and the Morals of Mortals

Despite all myth-and-symbol-mongering, and despite the various pragmatistic subterfuges, both such as philosophy prefers ("just the thing that you want"), and such as our individual unreasoning hurry and

feebleness can furnish forth, there are, it seems to me, certain recognitions which reality will gradually force upon us, and indeed is already forcing.

First and foremost, that we human creatures are only a tiny portion of Reality, and that Reality's methods, even those by which it has made us, are not necessarily the ones which our own omnipotent superfineness would have adopted. We shall have to admit that the process of evolution and selection that has made our morality is as unintelligent and ruthless as the one to which we owe our bodily structure and functions, is, in fact, the continuation of the same process. The admission will cost some pangs. More difficult even to admit will be that, despite such horrid origins, morality is "good" and tends to even greater goodness. This will be even more difficult to recognize, because while the majority of mankind shirk the thought of what is highest and most venerable being produced by every kind of evil, the minority shudder away from the claims of a moral code which has been elaborated by cruelty and stupidity, by perfunctory selfishness, and (as we see in the case of our taboo-born prohibitions), by ludicrous blunders. Anarchic religious mysticism has, throughout the centuries of faith, made light of the commandments, blotted out good and evil; and nowadays we can watch the law-breaking moralists extending, like Dostoiefsky, brotherly arms to those who, while victimizing their neighbours, are themselves victims of Nature by Fate.

But in proportion as we face things as they are, and not as we should like them to be, we shall gradually recognize that whatever infringement of our moral preferences may have been needed for the elaboration of our moral codes and ideals, these are, on the whole, the best and most improvable among our possessions, and one of the safest means to the gradual elimination of those very processes of human stupidity and brutality which have been active in their production.

Thus, for instance, though the Blind Immortals (blind because their eyes are not fixed solely on our small selves) have apparently found it necessary to lead mankind along by lies and false promises, mankind, thus led, has had to recognize that, whatever the Gods of the Universe may permit themselves, it—that is to say, you, I, and all our neighbours—had best deal as little as possible in statements which we know to be false, and in promises which we do not intend to keep.

V

The New Morality of Mortals

Perhaps there may be the foundation for a new morality for mortals (as distinguished from World Wills and Race Wills and other divinities) in the recognition by parents and guardians that you have to teach

children to consider things as *naughty* when they happen to be inconvenient, merely because there is no time to go into *whys* and *wherefores*, but without therefore invoking the sanction of those gods or chimney-sweeps who presided over the morals of our remote infancy. In other words, a new ethical attitude of recognizing that our moral preferences are not necessarily shared by the Cosmos, nor by all our fellow-creatures, nor by our ancestors and descendants even to the seventh generation, but that it is nevertheless needful that we, being *what* and *where* and *how* we are, should give these moral preferences paramount importance. Such an ethical attitude would recognize all the self-seekings which make us act, and recognize at the same time that we must frequently counteract them; that the world is moved by appetite and self-interest, and for this very reason curb appetite and purge interest of its selfishness; that all codes and institutions are provisional, perishable, mixed up of advantage and drawback, and that we must alter and at the same time respect them. Above all, such an attitude would take for granted that Nature snaps her fingers at us, and yet that we must not snap our fingers at Nature.

Such a new ethical and (philosophical) attitude would mean the possession of a rare and delicate accomplishment, namely, of intellectually and morally balancing ourselves, which we shall have, however difficult, to

learn: Balancing and looking both to the right and to the left, casting our glance forwards and backwards and all round us. For we shall have to take account of what seem contradictions, but are in reality only countervailing consequences; for instance, that the *Ego* and the Present are the only real existences and yet must perpetually sacrifice themselves to the *Alter* and the *Future*, these being in truth but a prolongation of them *in their own thought*, a part of their own mental contents, and their sole practical and moral touchstone.

All this will have to be learnt, is beginning to be learned already; but 'tis a slow and laborious job at best.

It was far easier and more convenient immediately (though perhaps not always in the long run) to talk of ourselves (as we were talked to) as "Your Father," or "Your Mother" with a religious impersonality of intonation, ignoring all possibility of imperfections. Easier and more convenient also to consider the Nation, the State, as something transcending both the tax-payers and the officials; far easier and more immediately convenient to set our likings and dislikings *ad dexteram Domini*, and consider that the Universe was made for Man, and Man was made by God.

Far easier and more convenient; particularly when dealing with children, servants, and the lower classes; and easier and more convenient to bear in mind ourselves. Unfortunately, these easy and convenient

methods did not correspond to the reality of things. And hence, despite the best will in the world, and especially the best Will to Believe and To-Make-others-Believe, there was a continual queer leakage in human ethics and politics, and a disquieting breaking off short. . . .

VI

"Ye are the Salt of the Earth"

And to begin with us Thinkers, who all think (whatever our other divergences) of ourselves as that salt wherewith the insipid and indigestible human mass needs to be salted. Given this undisputed fact, there are one or two precautions which might be commended to ourselves, to the purpose that we lose not our savour, become good for nothing, and be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

These precautions for keeping our salty virtues might be summed up as follows: Try to bear in mind and reconcile the two main facts of life: *To-day* and *To-morrow*; or, if you prefer, *What is* with *what ought to be.* Recognize the reality of things without therefore accepting (à la Whitman) their desirableness. Obey a law while taking steps to change it. Possess an esoteric ethic, but not a secret one. Declare openly to our neighbours that we have in this matter or that passed

beyond them, but recognize that though they will stand to-morrow where we are standing to-day, it is natural and useful that they should meanwhile, try to check our progress. Criticize, combat, and welcome criticizm and combat, select rigorously, and accept rigorous selecting of ourselves. With this would naturally go: make no use of *Vital Lies*; they are vital and useful only when they are honestly accepted as vital truths.

These, and doubtless other precautions might secure the Salt of the Earth against loss of savour. But then, it would have to begin with being such salt; and are we really any of us anything except lumps, more or less insufficiently salted, of the stale, yet fairly nourishing, dough of common humanity?

VII

Truth is what does not care what you think of it

Let us be truthful, if possible, even about the *love of truth*, and discard the heroics of the professional prophets, who, like Nietzsche and Tolstoi, think they are manfully facing the whole truth because they are pinning their attention to some aspect of Reality which inflicts pain on themselves, and through them, on their neighbours.

Reality is not a thing to which we can say, whether

with jubilation or lamentation, YES or NO. It is a thing which forces itself upon us, just because it IS reality. And perhaps intellectual manners and morals, at some distant day, may turn *looking things in the face* from a heroic counsel of perfection into a precept of common sense. As matters stand at present the *love of truth* is oftenest an unconscious excuse for the itch of self-assertion, the lust for inflicting pain even on oneself; or else for some misplaced taste for aesthetic effects "power," "distinction" (Nietzsche's *Vornehme*), and generally speaking, what your low bred neighbours cannot attain.

Truth, or, I should rather say, Reality, or plainly, "What exists whether we like it or not," is a far less satisfactory affair. I mean less satisfactory to the heroic, or dramatic, or elegiac instincts of thinkers. And the most unsatisfactory peculiarity about Truth is that, happening (*pace* Pragmatists!) to be independent of you, it may be agreeable or disagreeable or indifferent, or all three turn about, instead of being pre-arranged to afford you, even (as in lover's quarrels) by its indifference, desirable opportunities of pure joy, pure sorrow, heroic rebellion or stoical acquiescence, indeed any fine definite feelings. We—you and I, and every one of us—are neither the splendid champions nor the sombre adversaries ("de la réalité grands esprits contempteurs," wrote Baudelaise of certain scandalous sinners) of Reality. We are only a tiny scrap of it, de-

tached from the rest only inasmuch as it is forced upon our knowledge as something independent of us. And the difficult, useful, sensible, but also, alas! the uninteresting task is to recognize Reality as nearly as possible what it is, that is to say, as something infinitely bigger than yourself, infinitely more complex, infinitely more old established and long enduring, infinitely regardless of your likings and your posturings; and, which, as you are part of it, allows you to live and have your wishes only by recognizing its independence of you.

And here I would venture an additional attempt at defining truth. *Truth is that which does not care a button what you think of it.*

VIII

"And man for me," exclaimed a pampered goose.—POPE.

"To the stimulus of light," (so I read in a book of biology),[1] "the plant answers by unfolding its leaves, to the chemical stimulus by changes in assimilation and elimination; to the stimulus of temperature by acceleration of its processes of growth."

All that whirling cosmos of give-and-take even in a

[1] Richard Semon's *Mneme*, a book which, modestly studying the relations and equivalences between heredity, growth, and memory, has given us a new schematic vocabulary enabling us at last to think clearly on these and many other scientific and philosophical points.

plant, in the tiniest weed on the meanest duck-pond. And in the face of this myriad-activity we think it necessary to invoke copies of OUR Will, to furnish pattern sheets of OUR purposes and preferences for the Universe's explanation! How blind, deaf, and stolid has this will of ours, this purpose, this right-and-wrong of ours, made us, starving our potential perceptions, atrophying our imagination and our reason down to the narrow needs of our own survival! How it has reduced us to recognizing only ourselves as active in this thousandfold activity, allowing us to think such infinite change only in the terms of our half-dozen changes of consciousness!

Worse than that; our practical preoccupations have tried to put blinkers to those eyes of ours which at best cannot see our own ears, and bid our poor powers of thinking to think only such thoughts as may be immediately available. What I have dealt with in this volume under the lamentably debased name of *Pragmatism* is the philosophy of limiting down our thoughts within the narrowest practicality of all, that of individual consolation and of social convenience, of "What it would be better to believe."

The same philosophy (like most other philosophies) talks very big of the need, for our spiritual worthiness, of a belief in free will and immortality, a belief in something *transcending ourselves.*

Now such a belief in what transcends our ephemeral

pettiness is indeed requisite to save our intellectual eyesight, our logical and imaginative muscle, our whole spiritual life. But that something, transcending our whole smallness, is the network of relations independent of our convenience and our wishes, which we call Reality. And the belief in such existence transcending and continuing our own, that belief is manifested in the humble and heroic habit of seeking and accepting truth.

IX

Cui Bono?

There is a sense for ever growing in me, of the utter lack of aim in life as such, or rather of the illusory nature, the perfunctoriness of the various aims which we clap variously on to life's various pieces. But with this sense there grows, even stronger and more unfailing, the conviction that this should not make us doubt of life's value to ourselves, or of life's greatness in itself. Far from it; for if our aims are illusion, is this not a sign of life's sufficiency, of our living through life's (that is, our own) imperious constitution? It is life's own necessities and powers, obscure, disguised, imperative, leading to those acts, feelings, thoughts, which reflective reason tries vainly to explain and legitimate by *aims*. Nay, this very seeking for *aims*, this criticism and in-

terference of reason, is but another manifestation of those seemingly, those possibly, aimless necessities and powers of things.

For what are we living? Answer me first for what are the atoms attracting one another, the moisture condensing on the earth and evaporating off its surface, spreading the loam and carving the rocks; for what are the chalk animalcules laying down continents, and the coral insects building up islands all through the ages? For what is the flower-pollen being carried on the winds, for what is the carcass of the beasts giving back to the soil the elements which it took from it? FOR nothing: But BECAUSE *of* everything. And for what do we think, and thinking, ask such questions, except because thinking and asking are modes of our living. And if we go on thinking long enough, we may come to the conclusion that "to what purpose?" is a question which man has the right to ask only of his own doings, but has, with regard to them, the duty of asking it rather more critically at times, than he does.

X

"ECCE DEUS FORTIOR ME"

Admitting, once for all, the inevitable anthropocentrism of all our knowledge, there might come to be

a kind of religious importance and use in our thought of an unthinking (not an unthinkable!) Beyond, and in the conception of a universe to which our human likings and dislikings could not be applied.

In such a conception of an existence infinitely transcending our own, of which our Right and Wrong, our Why and Wherefore, are but minutest facets, in such a recognition of what contains and surpasses ourselves, it seems to me that we might profitably purify away the cloggings of our little human mechanism.

And in the thought of that for which our very questions cease to have any meaning, of existence apart from our wishes and sanctions, we might gain strength for our own living and thinking, even as the inhabitant of busy cities may seek refreshment in the scarce breathable air of barren mountain-tops, by whose snows and suns he is frozen and half-blinded, and by whose outlooks he is made dizzy.

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